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THE

LIFE AND TIMES

JOHN MILTON

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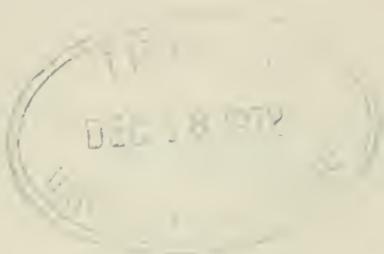
WILLIAM CARPENTER.

London:

WAKEFIELD, SHOEL LANE,

ONE DOOR FROM PEARL STREET.

[1836]



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P R E F A C E.

It may be thought by some, that the following Memoir of the Life and Times of Milton is rendered unnecessary by the numerous biographies of the patriot and poet already extant. There is certainly no lack of these, in point of number; but there is not one amongst them, in which Milton's character as a political writer is so fully exhibited and so justly appreciated, as the writer of the following memoir has long felt to be desirable. A recent editor of Milton's Prose Works has justly observed, that "Milton has been imprisoned in the temple of the Muses"; we may add, that his biographers, generally, have been more disposed to do the office of jailors than to set him at liberty, and make the world acquainted with his political character and patriotic claims.

His last biographer, Sir Egerton Brydges, has shewn more zeal than any of his predecessors, in repressing what we deem to be the more noble qualities of his intellect and his heart, and in keeping out of sight the more practically valuable and honourable portion of his literary labours. "It was not as a politician," says the baronet, "that Milton was ever a great favourite in the literary

world;" and hence the object of his piece of biography appears to be, to take its subject out of "the coarse conflict of practical affairs", and place him in those poetic regions where "aërial beings visit the earth", and the poet be found wrapped up in the creations of his own intellect! This is rank injustice to the character of Milton, and calls for animadversion.

Symmons has done more justice to Milton, in this respect, than any other writer, after his early biographer, Toland; but his Life of Milton is too voluminous for general circulation, and too discursive and critical for popular reading. It is in many respects an able production; but it is heavily written; while there is, throughout, too much of the biographer and critic, and too little of the subject of his memoir.

The following work is of humble pretensions, as a piece of literary and political biography. Its object is to make the popular mind more fully acquainted with the labours of Milton, in the cause of universal liberty, and more familiar with those unchanging principles of freedom on which he has demonstrated that the safety of states and the virtue and happiness of the people must ever be built. If this purpose should be achieved, the writer has nothing further to wish for.

March 22, 1836.

THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF
MILTON.

OUR task is a grateful one—to write the history of a man who united in himself the two high and honourable characters of PATRIOT and POET. Such men are rarely to be met with. There is something too ethereal in the feelings of the poet—something too illimitable in his views—to comport with that vivid perception of the common-place, every-day, localized circumstances of life, that is essential to the heart's blood of the patriot. The poet, like the metaphysician, is too much given to generalizing, to have his mind very strongly impressed with the weight and value of ordinary and isolated facts. His mind sweeps through the aggregate of the incidents and circumstances that constitute the natural and social world, giving only just so much attention to the several parts of which it is made up, as is necessary to constitute a sublime picture of the mighty whole.—Such a man can scarcely become a patriot. He must, indeed, possess enlarged and liberal feelings—his sympathies must be with the multitude of his fellow-men—the sight of injustice and oppression must ever render him uneasy; but to be a patriot, it is not enough that he mourn or rejoice, as social misery or happiness predominates; he must be so

strongly impressed with the enormity of social evils so much alive to the duties of every citizen in the struggle to annihilate them, and so thoroughly satisfied of the causes out of which they arise, as to be impelled forward into the arena of political strife, and encounter, at the hazard of liberty and of life, the deadly hostility of the agents of evil. The man of strong poetical perceptions and feelings, is not likely to be thus moved and operated upon, by the individual circumstances of others. But there are exceptions, and when we meet with them, either amongst our contemporaries, or associated with the worthies of by-gone times, they command our admiring reverence, and almost idolatrous homage. Such a man was John Milton.

"MILTON! thou shouldst be living at this hour;
 England hath need of thee: she is a fen
 Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
 Fireside, the heroic wreath of hall and bower,
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
 O, raise us up! return to us again!
 And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
 Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart:
 Thou hadst a voice, whose sound was like the sea:
 Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free;
 So didst thou travel on life's common way,
 In cheerful godliness: and yet thy heart
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay."^o

The birth-time of Milton was one of the most eventful periods in English history. "It was a stirring time for all minds, in every department. The whole reign of Queen Elizabeth had been full of gallantry, adventure, and great-mindedness; of all that captivates the imagination, and all that exercises and elevates the understanding; and it was as profound in learning as original and brilliant in native faculties of the intellect." "Poetry had been advanced to greater perfection than it has ever since reached, except by his own voice. Spencer

^o Wordsworth.

had not been dead ten years, and Shakspeare was yet living."* It was an epoch, too, of mighty events in the political world. France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland were all in an unsettled state; and in England, the base pusillanimity, unworthy favouritism, gross dissimulation, and cowardly vacillation of James the First, had created so much discontent and disaffection, while the intrigues of opposing religious factions had excited so strong a disposition for political change, that the whole frame-work of society threatened to be broken down.

It was at this eventful period that Milton was born; and he was destined to take an important part in the events that followed very shortly afterwards. His birth-day was the 9th of December, 1608; his birth-place was Bread Street, in the City of London. Toland justly remarks, that Milton had "too much good sense to value himself upon any other qualities except those of his mind;" nevertheless, he was not wholly indifferent to the reputation of his parents. In his "Second Defence of the People of England," he is led by the calumnies of his enemies, "to rescue his life from that species of obscurity which is the associate of unprincipled depravity;" and he commences his brief, but beautiful, piece of auto-biography, by saying, "I was born in London, of an honest family: my father was distinguished by the undeviating integrity of his life; my mother, by the esteem in which she was held, and the alms which she bestowed." The grandfather of Milton, who was under-tanger of the forest of Shotover, near Halton, in Oxfordshire, was a zealous Roman Catholic, and had disinherited his son, the father of the poet, in consequence of his having adopted the Protestant faith. It is certain that Milton's father was an accomplished scholar, and a man of refined taste. "He was a polite man, and

* Sir Egerton Brydges' Life of Milton, p. 6.

a great master of music," says Toland; which, indeed is evident from his son's beautiful Latin poem, "Ad Patrem"—

"By whom inspired, thyself
Art skilful to associate verse with airs
Harmonious, and to give the human voice
A thousand modulations; heir by right
Indisputable of Arion's fame."*

When his son was born, he was following the profession of a scrivener; but he was not negligent in discharging his duties as a parent. Besides the subject of our memoir, he had two other children; Anna, married to a gentleman of the name of Philips, and Christopher, who was educated for the bar, and who by his adherence to the royal cause, and his servility to the second James, was rewarded with a knighthood, and made one of the barons of the exchequer.

It is greatly to be deplored that we have so little information as to the early and private life of John Milton. We know not for what profession his father destined him, though it is certain from the poem we have already quoted, that it was not the law—

"Thou never badst me tread
The beaten path and bread, that leads right on
To opulence, nor didst condemn thy son
To the insipid clamours of the bar;
To laws voluminous and ill-observed."

His education, however, was liberal; partly under

* Cowper's translation. Syronon's translation is much more complimentary to the musical powers of Milton's father—

You! who by them inspired, with art profound,
Can wield the magic of proportioned sound:
Through thousand tones can teach the voice to stray,
And wind to harmony its mazy way,—
Arion's tuneful heir."

My kindred blood is warm with kindred flame;
And the son treads his father's track to fame,
Phœbus controls us with a common sway;
To you commands his lyre—to me his lay;
Whole in each bosom makes his just abode,
With child and sire the same, though varled, god.

domestic teachers, among whom was the learned Thomas Young; and partly under Dr. Gill, the chief master of St. Paul's School; and such was his application to study, that he made almost incredible progress, seldom going to bed before midnight, and giving numerous indications of the possession of that gigantic intellect that was subsequently more fully displayed. "Being thus initiated in several tongues, and having not slightly tasted the inexpressible sweets of philosophy, he was sent at fifteen to Christ's College, Cambridge, to pursue more arduous and solid studies."^{*} His father, no doubt aware of his extraordinary powers, incited him to still further efforts after knowledge;—a circumstance which his son gratefully remembers and affectionately acknowledges in his filial poem—

Thou, wishing to enrich me more, to fill
 My mind with treasure, led'st me far away
 From city din to deep retreats, to banks
 And streams Aonian, and, with free consent,
 Didst place me happy at Apollo's side.
 I speak not now, on more important themes
 Intent, of common benefits, and such
 As nature bida, but of thy larger gifts,
 My Father! who, when I had spend'd once
 The stores of Roman rhetoric, and learn'd
 The full-toned language of the eloquent Greeks,
 Whose lofty music graced the lips of Jove,
 Thysclf didst counsel me to add the flowers
 That Gallia boasts,—those, too, with which the smooth
 Italian his degenerate speech adorns,
 That witnesses his mixture with the Goth;
 And Palestine's prophetic songs divine.

He continued seven years at Cambridge, pursuing his studies with ardour, and occasionally producing some of those minor poems which induced Manhoff to say, that "Milton's writings shew him to have been a man from his childhood." In 1632, he obtained the degree of Master of Arts; and, having performed his exercises with much applause, he left the university, and returned to his father's house, at Horton, near Colebrook, in Berkshire. It seems

* Toland, p. 4.

† Polyhistor Literarius.

that he frequently visited London, during his residence at Horton, and this circumstance, added to an ungracious reflection on the university, in his epistle to Charles Diodati, which was written about this time, was afterwards made the occasion of his calumniators charging him with having been expelled from Cambridge for some misdemeanor, leaving it in discontent, because he could obtain no preferment, or relinquishing his academical exercises that he might spend his time in London, with lewd women, or at the play-houses. Milton answers this calumny in his "Second Defence;" and his enemies had not the hardihood to repeat it. Speaking of the University, he says, "Here I passed seven years in the usual course of instruction and study, with the approbation of the good, and without any stain upon my character, till I took the degree of Master of Arts. After this, I did not, as this miscreant feigns, run away into Italy, but of my own accord returned to my father's house, whither I was accompanied by the regrets of most of the fellows of the college, who shewed me no common marks of friendship and esteem. On my father's estate, where he had determined to pass the remainder of his days, I enjoyed an interval of uninterrupted leisure, which I devoted entirely to the perusal of the Greek and Latin classics; though I occasionally visited the metropolis, either for the sake of purchasing books, or of learning something new in mathematics, or in music, in which I, at that time, found a source of pleasure and amusement. In this manner I spent five years, till my mother's death. I then became anxious to visit foreign parts, and particularly Italy."

The fact seems to be, that Milton had too strong and settled a distaste for episcopacy to think of entering the church as a profession; and he had too great a mind and too haughty a spirit to submit to the petty formalities and pedantic

discipline of the college, after he had made sufficient advances in learning to be able to pursue it by himself, and after the fashion of his own taste.*

Milton had, even at this early age, produced several poems, both in Latin and in English, as extraordinary for their copiousness and command of early fable and history, as for the harmony of their numbers, and the sublimity and purity of their conceptions. The more important of these were "The Mask of Comus," "Lycidas," "Il Penseroso," and "L'Allegro." Comus was written in 1634, for John Egerton, the first Earl of Bridgewater, who had it represented at Ludlow Castle; Lycidas was written in 1637, just before the death of his mother. The precise dates of the other two are uncertain.

Sir Egerton Brydges, whose *Life of Milton* is a continuous lament over the bard's "prostitution" of his powers to political and theological controversy, and his seduction by "the gentle eloquence of fanaticism," thinks that he discovers in our author's early taste and early poems, many traits that are uncongenial with that "gloomy and morose spirit" which at last "totally obliterated his warmest poetical predilections."† He is forced to admit,

* In the "Apology for Smectymnus," Milton, speaking of the universities, affords us the means of ascertaining his thoughts and feelings about these establishments. Having described many individuals of the parliament as descended from ancient and high nobility, he says, "Yet had they a greater danger to cope with; for being trained up in the knowledge of learning, and sent to those places which were intended to be the seed plots of piety and the liberal arts, but were become the nurseries of superstition and empty speculations, as they were prosperous against those vices which grow upon youth out of idleness and superfluity, so were they happy in working off the harms of their absurd studies and labours; correcting by the clearness of their own judgment the errors of their misinstructiion, and were, as David was, wiser than their teachers. And, although their lot fell into such times, and to be bred in such places, where if they chanced to be taught any thing good, or of their own accord had learnt it, they might see that presently untaught them by the custom and ill example of their elders."—Schools like these, were assuredly not the places in which such a mind as Milton's could be "cabin'd cribb'd confin'd."

† It is astonishing that Sir Egerton Brydges should have been betrayed into such an expression as the following:—"Milton's writings

however, that there are "a few passages in his *Lycidas* concordant with it."* We deny that any such change came over the spirit of Milton; and we deny, moreover, that he ever assumed any thing like "the cold and dry hypocrisy of a puritan." The truth is, that his biographer is incapable of comprehending the nobler portion of Milton's character. He can appreciate his amazing powers of invention and description, dwell with rapture on his poetic sensibilities, and marvel at his extraordinary mastery over the mechanism of language; but his tory predilections render the "puritan" and "regicide" an object of his strongest dislike, and prompt him to assume the office of an apologist for Milton, where no extenuation or apology is called for. The very earliest of his writings breathe the same divine spirit, and indicate the same high and holy purpose, as are found in those which were avowedly put forth in the defence and furtherance of republicanism, and for the illustration and enforcement of the Christian system. The moral of his incomparable *Comus*, for example, is thus summed up—

"Mortal that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free;
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the apher' shime;
Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her."

Virtue, religion, and patriotism—if we may

afford a striking example of the strength and weakness of the same mind. Seduced by the gentle eloquence of fanaticism, he listened no more to the 'wild and native wood-notes of Fancy's child.' In his 'Iconoclastea,' he censures King Charles for studying one whom we well know was the closet companion of his solitudes, William Shakspeare." To suppose that Milton held Shakspeare lightly in his estimation, when he composed *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*—all the productions of his mighty mind after it had been, according to this biographer, "soured by puritanism"—is so preposterous that it merits no serious refutation; and to say that he *reproves* Charles for reading Shakspeare is a blunder too gross to impose upon any one who has read the passage to which reference is made. It is too long to quote here; but it will be found in "Iconoclastea" § 1. par 12.; or in page 279, of Mr. Fletcher's compendious, elegant, and cheap edition of Milton's Prose Works.

employ so many words to express what is all comprehended in one—characterise, more or less, the whole of Milton's compositions; though the sentiment may be introduced with much more subtlety in some than in others.

"Prelacy" is thus assailed in his "Lycidas," which was written in his twenty-ninth year, and before he had visited France or Italy.—

I sat came, and last did ge,
The pilot of the Galilean lake;
Two massy keya he bore of metal twain,
(The golden opes, the iron shute arnain)
He shook his mitred locks, and stern he speake:
How well could I have spar'd for thee, young awain,
Enew of such, as for their bellies' sake
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold?
Of other care they little reck'ning make,
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest;
Blind mouths: that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongo;
What recka it them? What need they? They are sped;
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songe
Grate on their scraschen pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said:
But that two-handed engie at the door
Standis ready to smite once, and smite no more.

Milton lost his mother in 1627, when he was about twenty-nine years of age, and he immediately afterwards resolved to make a tour abroad; being persuaded, as Toland remarks, that he could not better discern the pre-eminence or defects of his own country, than by observing the customs and institutions of others; and "that the study of never so many books, without the advantages of conversation, serves only to render a man either a stupid fool, or an insufferable pedant."* It is much to be regretted that we know so little of this extraordinary man during the period of which we are now speak-

* Toland, p. 2.

ing: the only description of his travels is that furnished by himself, in his brief auto-biography, to which we have already referred; and we prefer to give this verbatim, rather than to paraphrase it, after the fashion of his former biographers. No one can describe Milton or his actions so well as himself.

"I became anxious to visit foreign parts, and particularly Italy. My father gave me his permission, and I left home with one servant. On my departure, the celebrated Henry Wotton, who had long been King James' ambassador at Venice, gave me a signal proof of his regard, in an elegant letter which he wrote, breathing not only the warmest friendship, but containing some maxims of conduct which I found very useful in my travels. The noble Thomas Scudamore, King Charles' ambassador, to whom I carried letters of recommendation, received me most courteously at Paris. His lordship gave me a card of introduction to the learned Hugo Grotius, at that time ambassador from the Queen of Sweden to the French court; whose acquaintance I anxiously desired, and to whose house I was accompanied by some of his lordship's friends. A few days after, when I set out for Italy, he gave me letters to the English merchants, on my route, that they might shew me any civilities in their power.

"Taking ship at Nice, I arrived at Genoa; and afterwards visited Leghorn, Pisa, and Florence. In the latter city, which I have always more particularly esteemed for the elegance of its dialect, its genius, and its taste, I stopped about two months; when I contracted an intimacy with many persons of rank and learning, and was a constant attendant at their literary parties; a practice which prevails there, and tends so much to the diffusion of knowledge and the preservation of friendship. No time will ever abolish the agreeable recollections which I

cherish of Jacob Gaddi,* Carolo Dati,† Frescobaldo, Cultellero, Bonomathai, Clementillo, Francisco, and many others. From Florence I went to Sienna, thence to Rome; where after I had spent about two montha in viewing the antiquities of that renowned city, where I experienced the most friendly attentions from Lucas Holstein,‡ and other learned and ingenious men, I continued my route to Naples; there I was introduced by a certain recluse, with whom I had travelled from Rome, to John Baptista Manso, Marquis of Villa, a nobleman of distinguished rank and authority, to whom Torquato Tasso, the illustrious poet, inscribed his book on 'Friendship.' During my stay, he gave me singular proofs of his regard; he himself conducted me round the city, and to the palace of the viceroy; and more than once paid me a visit at my lodgings. On my departure he gravely apologized for not having shewn me more civility, which he said he had been restrained from doing, because I had spoken with so little reserve on matters of religion.

"When I was preparing to pass over into Sicily and Greece, the melancholy intelligence which I received of the civil commotions in England, made me alter my purpose; for I thought it base to be travelling for amusement abroad, while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home. While I was on my way back to Rome, some merchants informed me that the English jesuits had formed a plot against me, if I returned to Rome, because I had spoken too freely of religion; for it was a rule which I laid down to myself in those places, never to be the first to begin any conversation on religion; but if any questions were put to me concerning

* The historical painter.

† A nobleman of Florence, author of an *Essay on the discoveries of Galileo*, and of the *Lives of the Ancient Fathers*.

‡ The Librarian of the Vatican.

my faith, to declare it without any reserve or fear. I nevertheless returned to Rome. I took no steps to conceal either my person or my character; and for about the space of two months, I again openly defended, as I had done before, the reformed religion, in the very metropolis of Popery.

“ By the favour of God, I got back to Florence, where I was received with as much affection as if I had returned to my native country: there I stopped as many months as I had done before, except that I made an excursion of a few days to Lucca, and crossing the Appennines, passed through Bologna and Ferrara to Venice. After I had spent a month in surveying the curiosities of this city, and had put on board a ship the books which I had collected in Italy, I proceeded through Verona and Milan, and along the Leman Lake to Geneva.

“ The mention of this city brings to my recollection the slandering More,* and makes me again call the Deity to witness, that in all those places in which vice meets with so little discouragement, and is practised with so little shame, I never once deviated from the paths of integrity and virtue; and perpetually reflected, that, though my conduct might escape the notice of men, it would not elude the inspection of God. At Geneva I held daily conferences with John Diodati, the learned professor of theology.

“ Then, pursuing my former route through France, I returned to my native country, after an absence of one year and about three months, at the time when Charles, having broken the peace, was renewing what is called the episcopal war with the Scots; in which the royalists being routed in the first encounter, and the English being universally

* The *Clamor Regii Sanguinis ad Calum*, to which the *Defensio secunda pro Populo Anglicano, &c.* we are now quoting from, was an answer, was written by Peter Du Moulin, the younger, a Prebendary of Canterbury; but it having been published by Alexander Morus, or More, this man was supposed to have been the author.

and justly disaffected, the necessity of his affairs at last obliged him to convene a parliament."⁶

How beautifully does this simple and unpretending narrative, extorted from him by the malignant accusations of his enemies, develope the real character of Milton, both as a patriot and a Christian! He thought it base to be travelling for amusement abroad, while his fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home; and he immediately embarked for England, to take part in the glorious struggle for civil freedom. He was young and learned; honoured by some of the greatest minds then living, for his genius and conversation; and having open before him the road to fame and fortune, in the way most congenial with his natural temperament and chosen pursuits. Nevertheless, his love of liberty was so predominant over all other affections, and his sense of obligation as a British citizen so paramount to all other considerations, that he at once severed the ties that bound him to his studies, and threw himself into the hottest part of the battle.

But Milton, even in his younger years, did nothing at random, or without due reflection. He was governed by principles of the highest order, and made gratification wait upon duty. He had to pass through Rome on his way back to England, and having been informed that the jesuits had formed a conspiracy to do him some injury, in consequence of the freedom with which he had descended upon what he deemed to be their errors and vices, he resolved to avoid the possible imputation of cowardice, by remaining two months more in the strong-hold of their power, ready to defend, at the hazard of his life, the faith he had adopted, and the right of all men to judge for themselves on questions of religion. The rule which he laid down for his own guidance, was as creditable to his

⁶ Prose Works, pp. 931, 934. All our references are to the 3vo edition, published by Whately and Davis, and edited by Mr. Fletcher.

judgment as it was honourable to his piety. He would not obtrude his religious opinions upon others ; but when questioned as to their nature, he would not shrink from declaring and defending them, however great the danger to which such disclosure might subject him.

Milton was not unconscious of his own great powers, and having resolved to take part in the contest for liberty at home, it is by no means improbable that he already anticipated some honourable employment, in which an unspotted character, both for intrepidity and virtue, would be of material importance to the popular cause. His conduct in Italy obtained this for him ; and although at a subsequent period his enemies fabricated and published numerous calumnies, in reference to this period of his life ; these calumnies were all turned to the shame and punishment of their authors.

Upon his return to England, Milton, it seems, could discover no way in which he might directly serve the cause of the people. He therefore hired a house for himself in St. Bride's Church-yard, in the city, and renewed his literary pursuits, calmly awaiting the issue of the contest, which he trusted, as he says, “ to the wise conduct of Providence, and to the courage of the people.”

But, it must not be supposed that he did not, even during this period, labour to promote the welfare of others by his studies and labours. He consented to receive as pupils his two nephews, Edward and John Philips ; and subsequently, yielding to the importunities of some of his intimate friends, he added to their number, and instructed them in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and the other oriental dialects, in which he was profoundly skilled ; as well as in mathematics, cosmography, history, and some modern languages, as French and Italian. Toland has described the nature of the education he aimed at conferring upon his

pupils, which involved an innovation upon the established practice; and Symmons censures it, because it "respected things more than words, and attempted to communicate knowledge when the understanding was perhaps incapable of receiving more than the key which opened the immortal gate."* The fact is, that Milton had happily discovered the shortest and surest way to expand the faculties and inform the judgments of his pupils, by combining the knowledge of words and things, instead of subjecting them to the irksome and comparatively useless task of acquiring the mere knowledge of words, without any notion of the nature of the things of which they are the symbols.

Milton, however, could not hold himself long in this state of inglorious quietude, while his fellow-countrymen were risking their lives in the struggle for civil and religious liberty. The long parliament was now assembled as the representative of a nation, irritated and alarmed by many flagrant abuses of power in the civil and in the ecclesiastical departments. The king's violent conduct towards his four former parliaments, with his unrelenting imprisonment of its members, one of whom had died under the length and rigours of the confinement; his violent attempts to govern by prerogative alone; his arbitrary exactions in defiance of all law; and the severe sentences with which his council and his courts abetted and enforced his injudicious despotism, had alienated all the orders of the community, and had made them ripe for resistance and innovation. The despotism of the leaders of the church party had walked side by side with that of the court, and their rigorous persecution of the puritans, which was offensive to the feelings of the humane, and to the moderation of the liberal, had excited the fears and the jealousies of the wise. The power of the

* Life of Milton, p. 200.

episcopal courts had been every where urged into unusual animation by the superintendence and the incitement of the formidable high-commission; and almost every diocese had witnessed scenes of rigour similar to those which had disgraced and exasperated the capital.* There were not wanting in the church, some men of learning and piety, but the domineering and intolerant Laud was placed at their head, and exercised control over them. The character of this man, a knowledge of which is so necessary to enable us to judge of the circumstances of the times, is thus described by the tory and partial historian Hume, who is referred to as one of those whose testimony is the most favourable to the archbishop!

"This man was virtuous, if severity of manners alone, and abstinence of pleasure, could deserve that name. He was learned, if polemical knowledge could entitle him to that praise. He was disinterested; but with unceasing industry he studied to exalt the priestly and prelatical character, which was his own. His zeal was unrelenting in the cause of religion; that is, by imposing, by rigorous measures, his own tenets and pious ceremonies on the obstinate puritans, who had profanely dared to oppose him. In prosecution of his holy purposes, he overlooked every human consideration; or, in other words, the heat and indiscretion of his temper made him neglect the views of prudence, and the rules of good manners. He was in this respect happy, that all his enemies were also imagined by him the declared enemies of loyalty and true piety; and that every exercise of his anger, by that means, became, in his eyes, a merit and a virtue. This was the man who acquired so great an ascendant over Charles, and who led him by the facility of his temper, into a conduct which proved so fatal to himself and to his kingdom." He adds, that, "In return for Charles's

* Symmons' Life of Milton, p. 215.

indulgence towards the church, Laud, and his followers, took care to magnify, on every occasion, the regal authority, and to treat with the utmost disdain or detestation, all puritanical pretensions to a free and independent constitution. At the same time, while these prelates exalted the kingly power, they took care to set the priestly still higher, and endeavoured to render it independent of the sovereign. They declared it sacred and indefeasible; all right to private judgment in spiritual matters was denied to laymen; bishops held spiritual courts, without any notice taken of the king's authority; and in short, rapid strides were made, not only towards the haughty despotism of popery, but towards its superstitious acrimoniousness. . . . All his measures, in fact, tended to a most popish state of ceremonies in worship, and tyranny and intolerance in behaviour.”*

Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson has been more particular in her description of Laud's intolerant and arbitrary policy. She says, “The payment of civil obedience to the king and the laws of the land satisfied not; if any durst dispute his impositions in the worship of God, he was presently reckoned among the seditious and disturbers of the public peace, and accordingly persecuted; if any were grieved at the dishonesty of the kingdom, or the griping of the poor, or the unjust oppressions of the subject, by a thousand ways, invented to maintain the riots of the courtier, and the swarms of needy Scots the king had brought in to devour like locusts the plenty of this land, he was a puritan: if any, out of mere morality and civil honesty, discountenanced the abominations of those days, he was a puritan, however he conformed to their superstitious worship: if any showed favour to any godly, honest persons, kept them company, relieved them in want, or pro-

* History of England, chap. 111.

tected them in violent or unjust oppression, he was a puritan: if any gentleman in his country maintained the good laws of the land, or stood up for any public interest, for good order or government, he was a puritan: in short, all that crost the views of the needy courtiers, the proud, encroaching priests, the thievish projectors, the lewd nobility and gentry, whoever was zealous for God's glory or worship, &c. were puritans; and if puritans, then enemies to the king and his government, seditious, factious, hypocrites, ambitious disturbers of the public peace, and finally the pest of the kingdom. As such they not only made them the sport of the pulpit, which was become but a more solemn sort of stage; but every stage, and every table, and every puppet play, belched forth profane scoffs upon them; the drunkards made them their songs; all fiddlers and mimics learned to abuse them, as finding it a most gameful way of fooling."*

Milton was a diligent observer of all that was passing around him, and descriyng in the church the great source of much of the political and social evil which had assumed so fearful a form, as well as the great engine of oppression in the hands of the king, he at once adopted the resolution of taking an active part in "the coarse conflict of practical affairs." The moment was propitious for an assault upon the prelacy. The parliament had impeached the intolerant and persecuting primate, they had rescued his victims from their dungeons, they had recalled his exiles to behold his fall, they had released the press from its "horrid silence," and permitted it to pour out its long-imprisoned torrent on the heads of the oppressor and his party.

"The vigour of the parliament," says Milton, "had begun to humble the pride of the bishops. As long as the liberty of spech was no longer

* Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson, vol. i. pp. 122—124.

subject to control, all mouths began to be opened against the bishops; some complained of the vices of the individuals; others, of those of the order. They said it was unjust that they alone should differ from the models of other reformed churches, and particularly the word of God. This awakened all my attention and my zeal: I saw that a way was opening for the establishment of real liberty; that the foundation was laying for the deliverance of man from the yoke of slavery and superstition; that the principles of religion, which were the first objects of our care, would exert a salutary influence on the manners and constitution of the republic; and as I had from my youth studied the distinctions between religious and civil rights, I perceived that, if I ever wished to be of use, I ought at least not to be wanting to my country, to the church, and to so many of my fellow-Christians, in a crisis of so much danger. I therefore determined to relinquish the other pursuits in which I was engaged, and to transfer the whole force of my talents and my industry to this one important object.* The choice was made; Milton came out from his quietude, and took up his weapon for his country.*

It is amusing to listen to the lugubrious reflections upon this epoch of Milton's life, to which Sir Egerton Brydges gives utterance:—"Now Milton's

* It was from no moral cowardice that Milton preferred the pen to the sword; the closet to the field. He has stated, in his "Defensio Secunda," the motives of his choice, in a way that must command not only our assent, but our admiration:—"I did not for any other reason decline the toils and the dangers of war, than that I might in another way, with much more efficacy, and with not less danger to myself, render assistance to my countrymen, and discover a mind neither shrinking from adverse fortune, nor actuated by any improper fear of calamity or of death. Since, from my childhood, I had been devoted to the more liberal studies, and was always more powerful in my intellect than in my body, avoiding the labours of the camp, in which any robust common soldier might easily have surpassed me, I betook myself to those weapons which I could wield with the most effect; and I conceived that I was acting wisely when I thus brought my better and more valuable faculties, those which constituted my principal strength and consequence, to the assistance of my country and her most honourable cause."

evil day began; he entered into the stormy controversies which blind the imagination, and harden and embitter the heart. It was not for sublime talents like his, to entangle themselves in these webs; his mighty genius could not move under the oppressive weight of so much abstruse, and, I will add, useless, though multifarious and astonishing, learning."* "I cannot help lamenting that Milton spent so many years in these bitter political and sectarian squabbles: 'coarser minds' would have done for that work. He was always powerful—sometimes splendid; but here his passions were human, and too often mingled with earthly dross."† "Whatever merit Milton might have in the able and learned discharge of his political services, it is deeply to be lamented that his brilliant and sublime faculties were so employed. How the slumbering fire of his rich and ever-varying fictions must have consumed his heart and his brain: How he must have fretted at the base intrigues of courts and councils, and the turpitude of human ambition. To make a man of business requires nothing but petty and watchful observation, cold reserve and selfish craft: to catch the moment when caution in others is asleep; to raise hopes, yet promise nothing; to seem to give full information, yet to be so vague that every thing is open to escape. How can the poet practice such arts as these? He is lost in himself; he is wrapped up in his own creations."† "He lost nineteen precious years of his middle life, in those irritating occupations, from the age of thirty-two, to fifty-one: after that age, he occupied the remaining fourteen years of his life principally in poetry. It is melancholy to think how much of grand invention,

• Life of Milton, p. 74.

† Ibid. p. 124.

‡ Ibid. pp. 132, 133.

which he might in these long years have put forth, has been lost to the world."*

Nothing can betray a greater ignorance of Milton's character, than the remarks we have now quoted;—we will not say that they exhibit any indifference to the sacred cause of political and civil liberty. All the powers of Milton's great mind were as fully absorbed in his political and controversial writings, as they were in his poetical creations and abstractions; he was labouring not for a sect, but for the world; not for a momentary and petty triumph in dialectics, but for the establishment of those immutable and ever active principles which are identified with the well-being of society to the end of time. Every page of his political writings exhibits the fervour of his mind, and the enthusiasm with which he prosecuted a task which his biographer persuades himself must have been so abhorrent to his feelings. Mr. Fletcher forms a much juster estimate of Milton's character, and of the value of his prose writings.

"Prelates, and tithes, and kings," he remarks, "were not the burthen of his *song*, and therefore the poetry can be praised even by those whose souls are wrapped up in these things. While he soared away 'in the high reason of his fancies,' and meddled not with the practical affairs of life, his enemies can be complimentary, and undertake to bow him into immortality. They would fain suppress all other monuments of this Englishman:—it remains for us to appreciate them. Let us never think of John Milton as a poet merely, however in that capacity he may have adorned our language, and benefitted, by ennobling, his species. He was a citizen, also, with whom patriotism was as heroical a passion, prompting him to do his country service, as was that 'inward prompting' of poesy,

* *Life*, p. 188.

by which he did his country honour. He was alive to all that was due from man to man in all the relations of life. He was invested with a power to mould the mind of a nation, and to lead the people into 'the glorious ways of truth, and prosperous virtue.' The poet has long eclipsed the man;—he has been imprisoned even in the temple of the muses; and the very splendour of the bard seems to be our title to pass 'an act of oblivion' on the share he bore in the events and discussions of the momentous times in which he lived. Ought not rather his wide renown, in this capacity, to lead us to the contemplation and study of the whole of his character and his works? Sworn by a father who knew what persecution was, at the first altar to freedom erected in this land: he, a student of the finest temperament, bent on grasping all sciences and professing none, and burning with intense ambition for distinction,—forsook his harp, 'and the quiet and still air of delightful studies,' and devoted the energies of earliest and maturest manhood, to be aiding in the grandest crisis of the first of human causes: and he became the most conspicuous literary actor in the dreadful, yet glorious drama of the great rebellion. He beheld tyranny and intolerance trampling upon the most sacred prerogatives of God and man, and he was compelled by the nobility of his nature, by the obligations of virtue, by the loud summons of beleagured truth; in short, by his patriotism as well as his piety, to lay down the lyre, whose earliest tones are yet so fascinating; to 'doff his garland and singing robes,' and to adventure within the circle of peril and glory; and, buckling on the controversial panoply, he threw it off only when the various works of this volume,* surpassed by none in any sort of eloquence, became the record

* Milton's Prose Works, in one volume, published by Westley and Davis.

and trophy of his achievements, and the worthy forerunner of those poems which a whole people 'will not willingly let die.' The summit of fame is occupied by the poet, but the base of the vast elevation may justly be said to rest on these prose works; and we invite his admirers to descend from the former, and survey the region that lies round about the latter—a less explored, but not less magnificent domain."[•]

In 1641, Milton put forth the first of his works intended to subserve the cause of liberty, and advance the interests of the commonwealth. His treatise, "Of Reformation in England, and the causes that have hitherto hindered it," consists of two books; the object being to demonstrate the proposition, that prelacy is necessarily inimical to civil liberty. Such an analysis of these two booke as should do them justice, would be too dry and tedious to be perused with pleasure; we must therefore handle them in a lighter manner, laying before the reader only such passages as may, by the profundity of their learning, the vigour of their reasoning, the impassioned eloquence of their style, and their appropriateness to prelacy at all times and under all circumstances—induce a desire to peruse the entire work, which is throughout one strain of wisdom and eloquence. "Our author thunders into the ears of prelates and king, what all the people were panting to have uttered. Each topic becomes a formidable redoubt of argument and declamation, and each paragraph is worthy of attention. Every page, as we approach the close of the work, thickens with interest, and is crowded with all the burning rays of the most impassioned oratory. The apostrophe to England is at once affecting and sublime. He runs over the remainder of his task with such extreme rapidity, sentence after sentence, pealing

[•] Introductory Review, pp. 1. II.

like thunder, smiting like lightning, driving like a whirlwind, against the proud tops of the lordly hierarchy, that we must fain give up the task we had undertaken into the hands of the reader. On the high and holy ground of discipline, he calls for instant reformation, and after placing this point in a variety of lights, and surrounding it with a vast assemblage of argument, and answering the objections of the bit-by-bit reformers of those days, the piece closes in a peroration in the form of a prayer, piously laying the sad condition of England before the Greatest of Beings, than which there is not a more sublime, patriotic, ode in any language."*

How he tears the veil of hypocrisy from the hearts of the bishops, and exposes their worldly-mindedness and love of self and power, in the following eloquent passages!

"The bishops, though they had renounced the Pope, still hugged the popedom, and shared the authority among themselves, by their six bloody articles, persecuting the protestants no slacker than the pope would have done. And doubtless, whenever the pope shall fall, if his ruin be not like the sudden downcome of a tower, the bishops when they see him tottering, will leave him, and fall to scrambling, catch who may; he a patriarchdom, and another what comes next hand; as the French cardinal of late, and the see of Canterbury both plainly affected." "As for the bishops, so far were they from any such worthy attempts [to extinguish civil strife and promote pure religion] as that they suffered themselves to be the common stakes, to countenance with their prostituted gravities every politic fetch that was then on foot, as oft as the potent statists pleased to employ them. Never do we read that they made use of their authority and high place of access, to bring the jarring nobility

* Fletcher's Introductory Review, p. xlii.

to Christian peace, or to withstand their disloyal projects; but if a toleration for mass were to be begged of the king for his sister Mary, lest Charles the Fifth should be angry, who but the grave prelates, Cranmer and Ridley, must be sent to extort it from the young king? But out of the mouth of that godly and royal child, Christ himself returned such an awful repulse to those paltry and time-serving prelates, that after much bold importunity, they went their way not without shame and tears. Nor was this the first time that they were discovered to be followers of this world; for when the Protector's brother, Lord Audley, the admiral, through private malice and malengine, was to lose his life, no man could be found fitter than Bishop Latimer, (like another Doctor Shaw) to divulge in his sermon the forged accusation laid to his charge, thereby to defame him with the people, who else it was thought would take ill the innocent man's death, unless the reverend bishop could warrant them there was no foul play. What could be more impious than to debar the children of the king from their right to the crown? To comply with the ambitious usurpation of a traitor, and to make void the last will of Henry VIII., to which the breakers had sworn observance? Yet, Bishop Cranmer, one of the executors, and the other bishops, none refusing (lest they should resist the Duke of Northumberland) could find in their consciences to set their hands to the disenabling and defeating not only of Princess Mary, the papist, but of Elizabeth, the protestant, and (by the bishop's judgment) the awful issue of King Henry. Who then can think (though these prelates had sought a further reformation) that the least wry face of a politician would not have hushed them?"*

Having thus animadverted upon the conduct of

the prelacy of by-gone times, he proceeds to exhibit the character of those who lived in his own.—

“ It is still episcopacy that before all our eyes worsens and slugs the most learned and seeming religious of our ministers, who no sooner advanced to it, but like a seething pot set to cool, sensibly exhale and reak out the greatest part of that zeal, and those gifts which were formerly in them, settling in a shining congealment of ease and sloth at the top: and if they keep their learning by some potent sway of nature, it is a rare chance; but their devotion most commonly comes to that queasy temper of lukewarmness, that gives a vomit to God himself. But what do we suffer, mis-shapen and enormous prelatism, as we do, thus to blanch and varnish her deformities with the fair colours, as before of martyrdom, so now of episcopacy? They are not bishops, God and all good men know they are not, that have filled this land with great confusion and violence; but a tyrannical crew and corporation of impostors, that have blinded and abused the world so long under that name. He that enabled, with gifts from God, and the lawful and primitive choice of the church assembled in convenient number, faithfully from that time forward feeds his parochial flock, has his coequal and presbyterial power to ordain ministers and deacons by public prayer, and vote of Christ's congregation, in like sort as he himself was ordained, and is a true apostolic bishop. But when he steps up into the chair of pontifical pride, and changes a moderate and exemplary house for a misgoverned and haughty palace, spiritual dignity for carnal precedence, and secular high office and employment for the high negotiations of his heavenly embassage: then he degrades, then he unbishope himself; he that makes him bishop, makes him no bishop. No marvel therefore if St. Martin complained to Sulpitius Severus, that since he was bishop he felt inwardly

a sensible decay of those virtues and graces that God had given him in great measure before; although the same Sulpitius writes that he was nothing tainted or altered in his habit, diet, or personal demeanour from that simple plainness to which he first betook himself. It was not therefore that thing alone which God took displeasure at in the bishops of those times, but rather an universal rottenness and gangrene in the whole formation.”*

Here is a further thrust at their pride and conformity to the world—

“ So that in this manner the prelates, both then and ever since, coming from a mean and plebeian life on a sudden to be lords of stately palaces, rich furniture, delicious fare, and princely attendance, though the plain and homespun verity of Christ’s gospel unfit any longer to hold their lordship’s acquaintance, unless the poor threadbare matron were put into better clothes: her chaste and modest veil, surrounded with celestial beams, they overlaid with wanton tresses, and in a staring tire bespeckled her with all the gaudy allurements of a whore.”†

Here is the process for transforming a modern into a primitive bishop.—

“ He that will mould a modern bishop into a primitive, but yield him to be elected by the popular voice, undiocesed, unrevenued, unlorded, and leave him nothing but brotherly equality, matchless temperance, frequent fasting, incessant prayer and preaching, continual watchings and labours in his ministry; which, what a rich booty it would be, what a plump endowment to the many-beneficed gaping-mouth of a prelate, what a relish it would give to his canary-sucking and swan-eating palate, let old bishop Mountain judge for me.”‡

The unconcern with which the bishops extorted large revenues from the nation, and the profligacy with which they expended them, are thus reprobated—

* Prose Works, p. 4.

† Ibid. p. 7.

‡ Ibid. p. 6.

“ Two leeches they have that still suck, and suck the kingdom, their ceremonies and their courts . . . Believe it, right truly it may be said, Antichrist is Mammon’s son. The sour leaven of human traditions, mixed in one putrified mass with the poisonous dregs of hypocrisy, in the hearts of prelates, that lie basking in the sunny warmth of wealth and promotion, is the serpent’s egg that will hatch an Antichrist wheresoever, and engender the same monster as big, or little, as the lump is which breeds him. If the splendour of gold and silver begin to lord it once again in the church of England, we shall see Antichrist shortly wallow here, though his chief kennel be at Rome. If they had one thought upon God’s glory, and the advancement of Christian faith, they would be a means that with these expenses, thus profusely thrown away in trash, rather churches and schools might be built, where they cry out for want, and more added where too few are; a moderate maintenance distributed to every painful minister, that now scarcely maintains his family with bread, while the prelates revel like Belshazzar with their full carouses in goblets, and vessels of gold snatched from God’s temple; which (I hope) the worthy men of our land will consider. Now then for their courts. What a mass of money is drawn from the veins into the ulcers of the kingdom this way; their extortions, their open corruptions, the multitude of hungry and ravenous harpies that swarm about their offices, declare sufficiently. And what though all this go not over sea? It were better it did? better a penurious kingdom, than where excessive wealth flows into the graceless and injurious hands of common sponges, and the impoverishing of good and loyal men, and that by such execrable, such irreligious courses.”*

How truly descriptive is this of the prelacy of

• Prose Works, p. 15.

all times! It is, indeed, one of those forms of evil which are "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." This is one of the excellencies of Milton's writings—that whatever the immediate occasion that called them forth, they are informed with such a spirit—possess such learning, and eloquence, and insight into human nature, as are not affected by the lapse of time, but will apply as well now as heretofore. Let us listen to him once more, in a passage wherein he exposes the gross hypocrisy of these "pillars of the church," when they plead for its perpetuity, as the means of promoting morality and religion.—We specially commend it to the archbishops and bishops of our own time.

" Let us not be so over credulous, unless God hath blinded us, as to trust our dear souls into the hands of men that beg so devoutly for the pride and gluttony of their own backs and bellies, that sue and solicit so eagerly, not for the saving of souls, the consideration of which can have no place here at all, but for their bishoprics, deaneries, pre-bends, and canonries: how can these men not be corrupt, whose very cause is the bribe of their own pleading, whose mouths cannot open without the strong breath and loud stench of avarice, simony, and sacrilege, embezzling the treasury of the church, on painted and gilded walls of temples, wherein God hath testified to have no delight, warming their palace kitchens, and from hence their unctuous and epicurean paunches, with the alms of the blind, the lame, the impotent, the aged, the orphan, the widow? For with these the treasury of Christ ought to be, here must be his jewels disposed, his rich cabinet must be entered here: as the constant martyr, St. Lawrence, taught the Roman Praetors. Sir, would you know what the remonstrance of these men would have, what their petition implies? They intreat us that we would not be

weary of those insupportable grievances that our shoulders have hitherto cracked under; they beseech us that we would think them fit to be our justices of peace, our lords, our highest officers of state, though they come furnished with no more experience than they learnt between the cook and the manciple, or more profoundly at the college audit, or the regent house; or to come to their deepest insight, at their patron's table; they would request us to endure still the rustling of their silken cassocs, and that we would burst our windriffs, rather than laugh to see them under sail in all their lawn and sarcenet, their shrouds and tackle, with a geometrical rhomboides upon their heads: they would bear us in hand that we must of duty still appear before them once a year in Jerusalem, like good circumcised males and females, to be taxed by the poll, to be sconced our head-money, our twopences, in their chandlerly-shop-book of Easter. They pray us that it would please us to let them still hale us, and worry us with their bandogs and pursuivants; and that it would please the parliament that they may yet have the whipping, fleecing, and flaying of us in their diabolical courts, to tear the flesh from our bones, and into our wide wounds, instead of balm, to pour in the oil of tartar, vitriol, and mercury: surely, a right-reasonable, innocent, and soft-hearted petition. O, the relenting bowels of the fathers! Can this be granted them, unless God have smitten us with frenzy from above, and with a dazzling giddiness at noon-day?"*

The effect of biting irony like this, must have been tremendous, at a time when the hierarchy were the objects of universal suspicion and hatred, and when all men were impatient for their overthrow.

* *Prose Works*, p. 20.

It has been said that Milton, though incensed by the worldly-mindedness and hypocrisy of the dignitaries of the church, was, nevertheless, an adherent of the establishment ;—that his object was not the overthrow of the law-church, but only its reformation. This we deny ; and every line we have quoted may be adduced in support of our opinion. Milton was too profoundly learned in the Scriptures, and in the early ecclesiastical writings—too deeply impressed with the mischiefs that had ever flowed out of the church's association with the state—too sensitively alive to the secularising and formalising influence of an endowed church upon the purity and spirituality of the Christian faith and practice, to be an advocate for such an alliance. But if there should remain any doubt as to his principles, even at the early period when he published his “Reformation in England,” let it be dispersed by his own unequivocal declarations :—“I am not of opinion,” says he, “to think the church a vine in this respect, because, as they take it, she cannot subsist without clasping about the elm of worldly strength and felicity ; as if the heavenly city could not support itself without the props and buttresses of secular authority.” And again, speaking of Constantine as the first under whom “the temporal and spiritual power closed in one belief ;” or, in other words, as the founder of the first “established” church, he says, “Thus flourished the church with Constantine's wealth, and therefore were the effects that followed ; his son Constantius proved a flat Arian, and his nephew Julian an apostate, and there his race ended : the church that before by insensible degrees welked and impaired, now with large steps went down hill decaying : at this time Antichrist began first to put forth his horn, and that saying was common, that former times had wooden chalices and golden priests ; but they, golden chalices and

wooden priests." And after quoting Sulpicius on the corruption and inordinate ambition of the clergy of those times, he thus concludes—"Thus you see, sir, what Constantine's doings in the church brought forth, either in his own or in his son's reign."^{*}

We have quoted rather copiously from this work, for two reasons; the one, because it was Milton's first offering upon the altar of his country, and therefore possesses more than an ordinary degree of interest; the other, because his portraiture of prelacy is painted with so much truth and wisdom, and his arguments against it are wrought with so much power, that wherever this "soul corruption" exists, men should be incited to study and make known what he has so unanswerably alleged against it.

The prelates dared not to leave such attacks as these unanswered; and the task of replying to Milton and others was assigned to the two most learned of their body; namely, Archbishop Usher, and Bishop Hall; the former of whom produced a treatise on the "Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy," and the latter, "An humble Remonstrance to the High Court of Parliament." Milton had now entered fairly into this great controversy, and he was not disposed to shrink from either the labour or the responsibility of carrying it forward. "Afterwards," he says, "when two bishops of superior distinction vindicated their privileges against some principal ministers, I thought that on those topics, to the consideration of which I was led solely by my love of truth, and my reverence for Christianity, I should probably not write worse than those, who were contending only for their own emoluments and usurpations. I therefore answered the one in two books, of which the first is inscribed, concerning 'Prelatical Episcopacy,' and the other concerning the mode of

* Prose Works, p. 7.

Ecclesiastical Government; and I replied to the other in some Animadversions, and soon after in an *Apology.*"*

Usher was a man of great erudition, and possessed the aptitude of appropriating the stores of ancient learning to the exigencies and circumstances of his own time. This was his forte; and Milton set himself to the task of exploding the arguments and reasonings built up upon this foundation. Christianity, he argues, is not to be defined or maintained by that "indigested heap and fry of authors they call antiquity." "Whatsoever either time or the heedless hand of blind chance," says he, "has drawn down to this present in her huge drag-net, whether fish or sea-weed, shells or shrubs, unpicked, unchosen, those are the fathers." And so he chides the good bishop, remarks Toland, for divulging useless treatises, stuffed with the specious names of *IGNATIUS* and *POLYCARPUS*, with fragments of old martyrologies and legends, to distract and stagger the multitude of credulous readers. Mr. Fletcher justly observes, that the piece is highly worthy of perusal, as an exposure of the claims of tradition. It is a complete dispersion of antiquity's "cloud, or rather petty fog, of witnesses."

The other work was entitled "The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy, in two Books." Of this performance Toland truly says, "the eloquence is masculine, the method is natural, and the sentiments are free." It is in every point of view, a vigorous production, abounding with passages of great eloquence, and fraught with much power of argument. Mr. Fletcher, having quoted a passage of considerable beauty from this work, says, "There are numerous passages, rising, like this, out of the subject, not thrown in for the sake of ornament, in each of the seven chapters of the

* *Prose Works*, p. 720.

first book, every whit equal to this, and of every sort and variety of eloquence. Milton's flights into the regions of imagery are never taken either for the sake of display, or to escape from the presence of an argument. He is never in the air when he should be on the ground. He resorts to the wings of rhetoric, from the firm summit of a vast pile of argumentation, and though for awhile he may be lost in the solar blaze, he soon comes down with 'fell swoop' to his quarry. The second book consists of a preface, three chapters, and a conclusion. Awe-stricken yet are we in perusing the preface to this second book. More or less than man must he be who can read it without emotion. It is throughout magnificent—a glimpse into the heart and soul of Milton. He opens his bosom—he discourses with his conscience in our presence. He discloses his convictions of duty, and discovers his confidence of rectitude. He divulges his lofty hopes, springing out of his patriotism and his piety. Here we have that remarkable 'covenant with the knowing reader,' to attempt ere long some poetical work, which his countrymen would not 'let die.' The noble promise is a pledge for the greatest performance. His aspirations amount to positive faith. *Paradise Lost* is seen at the end of the radiant vista."*

The point at issue in this controversy was the divine or the human origin of episcopacy, as a peculiar order in the church, invested with spiritual rights and powers, distinct in kind and pre-eminent in degree. Milton, of course, maintained the negative side of the question, and never did he write with greater power or effect. The impetuosity of his feelings and his intense desire to make his readers not only understand but feel what he wrote, often led him to express himself coarsely and bitterly, and with a degree of rudeness and offensiveness that

* *Introductory Review*, p. xv.

would in these times be deemed intolerable. But then we must not forget either the difference in the taste and habits of the age, or the provocations and insults to which the party of which Milton formed one was subjected, by the haughty and persecuting prelates.

"The property of truth," says he, "is, where she is publicly taught, to unyoke and set free the minds and spirits of a nation, first from the thralldom of sin and superstition, after which all honest and legal freedom of civil life cannot be long absent; but prelacy, whom the tyrant custom begot, a natural tyrant in religion, and in state the agent and minister of tyranny, seems to have had this fatal gift in her nativity, like another Midas, that whatsoever she should touch or come near, either in ecclesiastical or political government, it should turn, not to gold, though she for her part could wish it, but to the dross and scum of slavery, breeding and settling both in the bodies and the souls of all such as do not in time, with the sovereign treacle of sound doctrine, provide to fortify their hearts against her hierarchy. The service of God, who is truth, her liturgy confesses to be perfect freedom; but her works and her opinions declare, that the service of prelacy is perfect slavery, and by consequence perfect falsehood."^{*}

This is not mere declamation, unwarranted by facts, as he proceeds to shew:—

"They and their seminaries shame not to profess, to petition, and never leave pealing our ears, that unless we fat them like boars, and cram them as they list with wealth, with deaneries and pluralities, with baronies and stately preferments, all learning and religion will go underfoot. Which is such a shameless, such a bestial plea, and of that odious impudence in churchmen, who should be to us a

* Prose Works, p. 53.

pattern of temperance and frugal mediocrity, who should teach us to contemn this world and the gaudy things thereof, according to the promise which they themselves require from us in baptism, that should the Scripture stand by and be mute, there is not that sect of philosophers among the heathen so dissolute, no not Epicurus, nor Aristippus, with all his Cyrenaic route, but would shut his school-doors against such greasy sophisters; not any college of mountebanks, but would think scorn to discover in themselves with such a brazen forehead the outrageous desire of filthy lucre, which the prelates make so little conscience of, that they are ready to fight, and if it lay in their power, to massacre all good Christians, under the names of horrible schismatics, for only finding fault with their temporal dignities, their unconscionable wealth and revenues, their cruel authority over their brethren that labour in the word, while they snore in their luxurious excess; openly proclaiming themselves now in the sight of all men, to be those which for a while they sought to cover under sheep's clothing, ravenous and savage wolves, threatening inroads and bloody incursions upon the flock of Christ, which they took upon them to feed, but now claim to devour as their prey. More like the huge dragon of Egypt, breathing out waste and desolation to the land, unless he were daily fattened with virgin's blood."*

He concludes by beseeching the parliament, who have been informed of the horrible misdeeds of the prelacy, to mingle mercy with judgment, in dealing with the huge evil and its authors.

"Though God for less than ten just persons would not spare Sodom, yet if you can find, after due search, but only one good thing in prelates, either to religion or civil government, to king or parliament, to prince or people, to law, liberty,

* Prose Works, p. 53.

wealth, or learning, spare her, let her live, let her spread among ye, till with her shadow all your dignities and honours, and all the glory of the land be darkened and obscured. But on the contrary, if she be found to be malignant, hostile, destructive to all these, as nothing can be surer, then let your severe and impartial doom imitate the divine vengeance; rain down your punishing force upon this godless and oppressing government, and bring such a dead sea of subversion upon her, that she may never in this land rise more to afflict the holy reformed church and the elect people of God.”*

About this time a pamphlet, written by five of the presbyterian divines, and bearing the title of “Smectymnuus,”† made some noise in the country, and was replied to by Bishop Hall, in “A Defence of the Remonstrance.” This induced Milton again to take up his pen against the bishops, and he shortly afterwards published his “Animadversions upon the Remonstrant’s Defence against Smectymnuus.” Even Milton’s most favourable and partial biographers deprecate the tone of this work, which they characterise as “personal, rude, and offensive;” but again we must remind the reader, that these polemical works were written at no ordinary time, and under no ordinary circumstances. The church was the strong-hold of corruption, and it sent forth its turbid and contagious waters throughout all the channels of the civil government, and of the country. To cut off these was a work of pre-eminent importance, and Milton knew that the shameless guardians and feeders of the foul spring of mischief were not to be dealt with in soft and honied phrases, but only in the language of stern, indignant, and bitter denunciation. But his

* Prose Works, p. 54.

† The title was formed out of the initials of the writers’ names.

own defence of his style and manner, in this controversy, is the best we can have; and all his biographers, even including Symmons, have most unaccountably suppressed it.

"Although it be a certain truth," he says, "that they who undertake a religious cause need not care to be men-pleasers; yet because the satisfaction of tender and mild consciences is far different from that which is called men-pleasing, to satisfy such, I shall address myself in few words, to give notice before-hand of something in this book, which to some men perhaps may seem offensive, that when I have rendered a lawful reason of what is done, I may trust to have saved the labour of defending or excusing hereafter. We all know that in private or personal injuries, yea in public sufferings for the cause of Christ, his will and example teaches us to be so far from a readiness to speak evil, as not to answer the reviler in his language, though never so much provoked; yet in the detecting and convincing of any notorious enemy to truth and his country's peace, especially that is conceited to have a voluble and smooth fluence of tongue, and in the vain confidence of that, and out of a more tenacious cling to worldly respects, stands up for all the rest to justify a long usurpation and convicted pseudopiscopy of prelates, with all their ceremonies, liturgies, and tyrannies, which God and man are now ready to explode and hiss out of the land; I suppose, and more than suppose, it will be nothing disagreeing from Christian meekness to handle such a one in a rougher accent, and to send home his haughtiness well bespurted with his own holy water."

After justifying this course by authorities to which all Christians must defer, and pointing out the enormity of the prelatrical mischief which these persons set themselves up to defend, he adds—

"And although, in the serious uncasing of a

grand imposture (for to deal plainly with you, readers, prelacy is no better) there be mixed here and there such a grim laughter, as may appear at the same time in an austere visage, it cannot be taxed of levity or insolence; for even this vein of laughing (as I could produce out of grave authors,) hath oftentimes a strong and sinewy force in teaching and confuting; nor can there be a more proper object of indignation and scorn together, than a false prophet taken in the greatest, dearest, and most dangerous cheat, the cheat of souls: in the disclosing whereof, if it be harmful to be angry, and withal to cast a lowering smile, when the properest object calls for both, it will be long enough ere any be able to say, why those two most rational faculties of human intellect, anger and laughter, were first seated in the breast of man."*

The "Animadversions" are written in the form of a dialogue between the Remonstrant and his antagonist; we can give only one sample of the smartness with which the answers are made. The Remonstrant had said, "If in time you shall see wooden chalices and wooden priests, thank yourselves;" to which Milton answers, "It had been happy for this land, if your priests had been but only wooden: all England knows they have been to this island not wood, but worm-wood, that have infected the third part of our waters, like the apostate starre in the Revelation, that many souls have died of their bitterness; and if you mean by wooden, illiterate or contemptible, there was no want of that sort among you, and their number increasing daily, as their laziness, their tavern-hunting, their neglect of all sound literature, and their liking of doltish and monastical schoolmen daily increast."

When we consider these works as the produc-

* Preface to "Animadversions," Prose Works, p. 55.

tions of one year, and of a man occupied with the fatiguing duties of an instructor of youth, we must necessarily wonder at that unwearied industry, that ready application of various knowledge, and that exuberant fertility of ardent mind, which their composition so manifestly discovers. These five pieces were all written in 1641, when their author was thirty-three years of age.*

Early in 1642, the "Animadversions" were replied to by Bishop Hall, or his son, as it was thought, in a publication, which the author chose to entitle, "A modest Confutation of a slanderous and scurrilous Libel, by John Milton, Gent.," and in which he not only treated Milton with great contumely and insult, but also assailed him with the most virulent and rancorous personal abuse. Milton was "dauntless, defiant, and, when insulted, fierce;" and in his "Apology for Smectymnuus," he proved himself to be a full match for the bishop or his son, even in scurrility and calling hard names. His *meek* and *pious* adversary had accused him of lewdness and sensuality, had darkly hinted at other crimes, and called upon his fellow Christians to "stone the miscreant wretch to death," and we cannot wonder at the warmth of Milton's reply, or at the little scruple with which he scattered his various instruments of pain. Besides, Milton knew that others were partakers of the author's sins; that he was but the mouth-piece of the episcopal order, and that, in his most bitter and malignant assaults upon the character of his adversary, he had the concurrence and approbation of his fellows. "He well knew what he was about," says Mr. Fletcher, "when he poured his overwhelming sarcasms on his assailants. It was as much out of his power to alter or soften the style in which he wrote, and for which he has been insolently abused, as to 'dis-

* See Symmons' Life, p. 238.

solve the groundwork of nature, which God created in him.' A regard to truth, the relief of his 'burden,' the full reflection of his very soul, whatever might be the state of its emotions, on his friends or his foes, rendered it impossible for him to divest himself of it."

The description Milton here gives of the university men, will be found true to the letter, even in much later times.—

"What with truanting and debauchery, what with false grounds, and the weakness of natural faculties in many of them (it being a maxim with some men to send the simplest of their sons thither) perhaps there would be found among them as many unsolid and corrupted judgments, both in doctrine and life, as in any other two corporations of the like bigness. This is undoubted, that if any carpenter, smith, or weaver, were such a bungler in his trade, as the greater number of them are in their profession, he would starve for any custom: and should he exercise his manufacture as little as they do their talents, he would forget his art: or, should he mistake his tools as they do theirs, he would mar all the work he took in hand."^o

The *pious* churchman had volunteered the following advice to Milton's acquaintances, that is, if they were *genuine Christians*!—"You that love Christ, and know this miscreant wretch, stone him to death, lest you smart for his impunity," whereupon Milton retorts without scruple—

"The Remonstrant having to do with grave and reverend men, his adversaries, thought it became him to tell them in scorn, that 'the bishop's foot had been in their book and confuted it;' which when I saw him arrogant, to have done that with his heels that surpassed the best consideration of his head, to spurn a consultation among respected men, I questioned not the lawfulness of moving

^o *Prose Works*, p. 92

his jollity to bethink him, what odour a sock would have in such painful business. And this may have chanced to touch him more nearly than I was aware, for indeed a bishop's foot that hath all the toes maugre the gout, and a linen sock over it, is the aptest emblem of the prelate himself; who being a pluralist, may under one surplice, which is also linen, hide four benefices, besides the metropolitan toe, and send a fouler stench to heaven, than that which this young queaziness retches at. And this is the immediate reason here why our enraged confessor, that he may be as perfect a hypocrite as Caiaphas, ere he be a high-priest, cries out 'horrid blasphemy!' and like a recreant Jew, calls for stones. I beseech ye friends, ere the brick-bats fly, resolve me and yourselves, is it blasphemy, or any whit disagreeing from Christian meckness, when as Christ himself, speaking of unsavoury traditions, scruples not to name the dunghill and the jakes, for me to answer a slovenly wincer of a confutation, that if he would needs put his foot to such a sweaty service, the odour of his sock was like to be neither musk nor benjamin. What thinks the Remonstrant? Does he like that such words as these should come out of his shop, out of his Trojan horse! To give the watch-word like a Guisian of Paris to a mutiny or massacre; to proclaim a croisade against his fellow-Christian now in this troublous and divided time of the kingdom? If he do, I shall say that to be the Remonstrant, is no better than to be a jesuit; and that if he and his accomplices could do as the rebels have done in Ireland to the protestants, they would do in England the same to them that would no prelates. For a more seditious and butcherly speech no cell of Loyola could have belched against one who in all his writing spake not, that any man's skin should be raised."*

* Prose Works, p. 82.

In the course of this work, Milton, in defending himself against the malignant insinuations and charges of his *recerend* accuser, lets us into a knowledge of some part of his own course of life, which we should not otherwise have possessed.

“ He follows me to the city, still usurping and forging beyond his book notice, which only he affirms to have had; ‘ and where my morning haunts are, he wisses not.’ It is wonder that being so rare an alchymist of slander, he could not extract that, as well as the university vomit, and the suburb sink which his art could distil so cunningly; but because his limbec fails him, to give him and envy the more vexation, I will tell him those morning haunts are where they should be, at home; not sleeping, or concocting the surfeits of an irregular feast, but up and stirring, in winter often ere the sound of any bell awake men to labour, or to devotion; in summer as oft with the bird that first rouses, or not much tardier, to read good authors, or cause them to be read, till the attention be weary, or memory have its full fraught; then with useful and generous labours preserving the body’s health and hardiness to render lightsome, clear, and not lumpish obedience to the mind, to the cause of religion and our country’s liberty, when it shall require firm hearts in sound bodies to stand and cover their stations, rather than to see the ruin of our protestation, and the enforcement of a slavish life.”*

Milton never loses an opportunity of expressing his hostility to the bishops. His adversary having said, “ I am no bishop; I was never born to it,” our author replies—“ Let me tell this wizard, since he calculates so right, that he may know there be in the world, and I among those, who nothing admire his idol, a bishopric; and hold that it wants

* Prose Works, pp. 79, 80.

so much to be a blessing, as that I rather deem it the merest, the falsest, the most unfortunate gift of fortune. And were the punishment and misery of being a prelate bishop terminated only in the person, and did not extend to the affliction of the whole diocese, if I would wish anything in the bitterness of my soul to mine enemy, I would wish him the biggest and fattest bishopric."*

It would have been strange, indeed, had a mind and pen like those of Milton failed to produce an effect upon the public. Such was not the case. As he himself informs us, when he first directed his attention to the evils growing out of the church, there was a strong public feeling against it; but this feeling was generally vague; or rather, it wanted direction: it was expending itself in useless declamation and vituperation. Milton and those who laboured with him in the same cause, gave it this direction, and rendered it productive of much good.

Early in December, 1640, a petition was presented to the House of Commons, signed by fifteen thousand citizens of London, praying the legislature to suppress the archbishops and bishops. The house immediately entered into the subject, and a censure was passed upon the whole body of the clergy, many of whom were also severely punished, by imprisonment and otherwise. A bill was also passed, to "restrain bishops and others in holy orders, from intermeddling with secular affairs." This was sent up to the Lords on the 1st of May, 1641, and was opposed in a lengthy speech by Bishop Hall, who deprecated the project for ejecting the bishops from the House of Lords; and it was finally rejected. On the very day that this took place in the upper house, the Commons read a second time, by a large majority of votes, a bill

* *Prose Works*, p. 91.

entitled, "An act for the utter abolishing and taking away of all archbishops, bishops, their chancellors and commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, prebendaries, chanters, canons, and other under officers, out of the church of England." On the 11th of January, 1642, a petition was presented to the House of Commons, from the county of Buckinghamshire, which prayed that popish lords and bishops might be forthwith ousted from the House of Peers, without which, as the petitioners said, they had not the least hope of the kingdom's peace. On the 5th of February, the bill passed the House of Lords; but the king refused his assent to it; saying, that he would take the matter into consideration, and send an answer in convenient time. This being communicated to the Commons, the house expressed its sorrow at the delay, which it held to be as bad as denial; and seeing "the passing of the bill to be a matter of great importance, the vote of the whole kingdom being for it, as may appear by daily petitions from several parts," they obtained the concurrence of the Lords in drawing up three reasons for the speedy passing of the measure, and sent them up to the king by a deputation. On the 14th of February, the bill received the royal assent; "the grace and goodness of which were formally acknowledged in an address from both houses."

We are now brought, in the course of our narrative, to a domestic event in Milton's life, which was productive of consequences of great importance both to himself and to the public. "About Whitsuntide," says his nephew Philips, "he took a journey into the country, nobody about him certainly knowing the reason, or that it was more than a journey of recreation. After a month's stay, home he returns a married man, who set out a

bachelor; his wife being Mary, the eldest daughter of Mr. Richard Powell, then a justice of the peace, of Forest Hill, near Shotover, in Oxfordshire." Milton's matrimonial choice seems, in this instance, as Symmons remarks, to have been the suggestion of fancy alone, and its consequences were those which might have been expected from a connexion so evidently imprudent. Strongly attached with all her family to the royalist party, and accustomed to the affluent hospitality of her father's house, where there was, as Aubrey mentions, a great deal of company, of merriment, and of dancing, the wife of Milton would not probably find much gratification in the frugal establishment, the retired and studious habits, or the political conversation of her literary and republican husband. In the event, the effect followed regularly and immediately from its cause. After a month's experience of her new life, to the full taste of which the departure of her friends, who had been present at the nuptial festivities, had only just resigned her, the lady sighed for the gaieties which she had left; and obtaining permission, by the earnest request of her relations, for a short absence, she revisited Forest Hill. The period fixed for her return passed over, but she did not appear, and Milton wrote a letter urging her immediate return. The letter remained unanswered, as did several subsequent ones to the same purport, and at length her husband, incensed at her conduct, sent a messenger to her father's house, with instructions to bring her to London. Here insult was added to contumely; the messenger was dismissed with rudeness, and the wife remained behind.

Milton now became conscious of the impropriety and folly of which he had been guilty, in marrying into a family whose tastes and politics were so diametrically opposed to his own. Symmons very reasonably attributes the conduct of the Powells to the prosperous fortunes of the king, whose forces

had defeated those of the parliament under Fairfax, in the north, and under Waller, in the west. This had extraordinarily elated the spirits of the loyalists, to which the family of Milton's wife belonged, and it is likely enough that they resolved thus to break the offensive alliance they had formed, and at the same time to affront its object. Be this as it may, their conduct was such as we have described it to be, and Milton, who was too high-minded to submit to insult or injustice, resolved to treat his wife henceforth as a stranger, and to hold himself released from the marriage bond. To justify to the world the step he had taken, he published, in the year 1644, a treatise on "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce," which he dedicated to the parliament, and the assembly of divines at Westminster; hoping, that as they were employed in promoting a general reformation of the kingdom, they might take this subject also of *domestic liberty* into consideration; being of opinion that all the boasted *freedom* of public judicatures signified little, if the meanwhile a husband must be obliged to submit to a kind of *sercitude* in domestic life, below the dignity of a man, or, as he expressed it, "a disconsolate household captivity, without refuge or redemption." The first edition of this book was published anonymously, the reason for which, as well as that for his subsequent avowal of it, he thus states, "God, it seems, intended to prove me, whether I durst alone take up a rightful cause against a world of disesteem, and found I durst, my name I did not publish, as not willing it should sway the reader either for me or against me. But when I was told that the style, which, what it ails to be so soon distinguishable I cannot tell, was known by most men, and that some of the clergy began to inveigh and exclaim on what I was credibly informed they had not read; I took it then for my proper reason to shew them a name

that could easily contain such an indiscreet kind of censure, and to reinforce the question with a more accurate diligence: that if any of them would be so good as to leave railing, and to let us hear so much of his learning and Christian wisdom, as will be strictly demanded of him in his answering to this problem, care was had he should not spend his preparations against a nameless pamphlet.”*

The design of this treatise was to shew, that there are other sufficient reasons for divorce besides adultery, and that to prohibit any sort of divorce, but such as are excepted by Moses, is unjust and against the reason of the law. The grand position he maintains is, “ that indisposition, unfitness, and contrary humours, proceeding from any unchangeable cause in nature, hindering, and always likely to hinder, the main ends and benefits of conjugal society, which are solace and peace, are greater reasons of divorce than adultery, or natural frigidity, provided there be a mutual consent for separation.” “ Not,” as he elsewhere observes, “ that licence and levity, and unconsented breach of faith should herein be countenanced, but that some concessionable and tender pity might be had of those who have unwarily, in a thing they never practised before, made themselves the bondmen of a luckless and helpless matrimony.”†

The amount of labour and learning expended upon this undertaking is indeed prodigious, and its publication created a great sensation. The clergy in general—episcopalian and presbyterian—if they agreed in nothing else, at least united in assailing the author: he was attacked with great bitterness, and denounced as an atheist, a heretic, and a lewd monster. The parliament was importuned to condemn the book and its author: all the services he

* Judgment of Martin Bucer, Prose Works, p. 162.

† Prof. Doct. and Discip. Works, p. 125.

had rendered to the “puritans” were at once forgotten, and the high and holy motives by which he had been impelled to sacrifice his repose, and forego the smiles of Fortune, were but as a feather in the scale against the monstrous impiety and depravity of heart imputed to him on this account. The assaults of the clerics urged Milton to measure weapons with them again, and he published “The Judgments of the famous Reformer, MARTIN BUCER, touching Divorce, extracted out of the second book of the Kingdom of Christ, dedicated to king Edward the Sixth;” and shortly afterwards, “Tetrachardon:” expositions of the four chief passages of Scripture which treat of marriage, or nullities of marriage. “The former book,” (‘The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,’) says he, “as pleased some to think, who were thought judicious, had of reason in it to a sufficiency; what they required was, that the Scriptures there alleged might be discussed more fully. To their desires thus much further hath been laboured in the Scriptures. Another sort, also, who wanted more authorities and citations, have not been here unthought of. If all this attain not to satisfy them, as I am confident that none of those our great controversies at this day, hath had a more demonstrative explaining, I must confess to admire what it is; for doubtless it is not reason now-a-day, that satisfies or suborns the common credence of men, to yield so easily, and grow so vehement in matters much more disputable, and far less conduced to the daily good and peace of life.”

In 1645, came forth his fourth book upon this subject, entitled “Colasterion.” It was a reply to “A Nameless Answer against ‘The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,’” the author of which is said to have “added to all the dulness and ignorance imaginable, the greatest degree imaginable of bitterness and malice.” The “Reply” is characterised

as "a jolly slander," called, "Divorce at Pleasure;" than which nothing could be more unlike the character or object of the treatise to which it referred. "What book hath he ever met with as his complaint is," says Milton, "maintaining either in the title or in the whole pursuance, 'Divorce at Pleasure?' It is true, that to divorce upon extreme necessity, when through the perverseness, or the apparent unfitness of either, the continuance can be to both no good at all, but an intolerable injury and temptation to the wronged and the defrauded; to divorce then, there is a book that writes it lawful. And that this law is a pure and wholesome national law, not to be withheld from good men, because others likely enough may abuse it to their pleasure, cannot be charged upon that book, but must be entered a bold and impious accusation against God himself; who did not for this abuse withhold it from his own people."*

It seems that the slander which called forth the "Colasterion," bore the *imprimeur* of Caryl, the puritan divine, who volunteered therein his condemnation of Milton's principles. The licenser is "conferred with," in the reply, and received, it must be confessed, a very rough handling for his pains. Milton's indignation is not unreasonable, when it is remembered how great and many services he had done for those who were now invested with the power that was used against him. Besides, he had been grossly deceived as to the strength and purity of their principles, and his disgust and anger were natural enough. While the episcopalians were revelling in the public wealth, the presbyterians bitterly inveighed against them, and the system under which they attained this wealth; but no sooner did they get into the place of their antagonists, than they became as greedy after

* Colasterion, Works, p. 220.

"filthy lucre," and as unscrupulous as to the means of procuring it, as ever the episcopalianists had been. They had, therefore, in Milton's estimation, added hypocrisy to ingratitude, and it was not in his nature to spare the persons of men blackened by these vices. Caryl was one of them, and he felt the full weight of Milton's indignation. "Mr. Licencer," said he, "you are reputed a man discreet enough, religious enough, honest enough, that is, to an ordinary competence in all these; but now your turn is to hear what your own hand hath earned ye; that when you suffered this nameless hangman to cast into public such a despiteful contumely upon a name and person deserving of the church and state equally to yourself, and one who hath done more to the present advancement of your own tribe, than you or many of them have done for themselves; you forget to be either honest, religious, or discreet. Whatever the state might do concerning it, supposing it were a matter to expect evil from, I should not doubt to meet among them with wise, and honourable, and knowing men: but as to this brute libel, so much the more impudent and lawless for the abused authority which it bears, I say again, that I abominate the censures of rascals and their licencers."

These treatises, as Mr. Fletcher remarks, "are equal to any which Milton ever wrote. Every page is strewed with felicities, and the *mens dictior* shines out with a lustre unsurpassed by himself on happier, though not more interesting, themes."[•] He makes out a strong case, and fights with arguments which are not easily to be repelled. The whole context of the Holy Scriptures, the laws of the first Christian emperors, the opinions of some of the most eminent among the early refor-

• Prose Works, p. 229.

mers, and a projected statute of Edward the Sixth, are adduced by him for the purpose of demonstrating that, by the laws of God, and by the influences of the most virtuous and enlightened men, the power of divorce ought not to be rigidly restricted to those causes which render the nuptial state unsatisfactory, or which taint it with a spurious offspring. Regarding mutual support and comfort as the principal object of this union, he contends that whatever defrauds it of these ends essentially vitiates the contract, and must necessarily justify its dissolution. The subtlety and acuteness of his reasoning will be apparent enough from the two following passages, which we transfer to these pages, in the hope that they will induce the reader of them to peruse the entire work. In the first passage, he speaks of the first reason of the law for which he contends:—

“ For all sense and equity reclaims, that any law or covenant, how solemn or straight soever, either between God and man, or man and man, though of God’s joining, should bind against a prime and principal scope of its own institution, and of both or either party covenanting: neither can it be of force to engage a blameless creature to his own perpetual sorrow, mistaken for his expected solace, without suffering charity to step in, and do a confessed good work of parting those, whom nothing holds together but this of God’s joining, falsely supposed against the express end of his own ordinance. And what his chief end was of creating woman to be joined with man, his own instituting words declare, and are infallible to inform us what is marriage, and what is no marriage; unless we can think them set there to no purpose: ‘ It is not good,’ saith he, ‘ that man should be alone, I will make him a help-meet for him.’ From which words, so plain, less cannot be concluded, nor is by any learned interpreter, than that in God’s in-

tention a meet and happy conversation is the chieffest and the noblest end of marriage: for we find here no expression so necessarily implying carnal knowledge, as this prevention of loneliness to the mind and spirit of man. To this, Fagius, Calvin, Pareus, Rivetus, as willingly and largely assent as can be wished. And indeed it is a greater blessing from God, more worthy so excellent a creature as man is, and a higher end to honour and sanctify the league of marriage, when as the solace and satisfaction of the mind is regarded and provided for before the sensitive pleasing of the body. And with all generous persons married thus it is, that where the mind and person pleases aptly, there some unaccomplishment of the body's delight may be better borne with, than when the mind hangs off in an unclosing disproportion, though the body be as it ought; for there all corporal delight will soon become unsavoury and contemptible. And the solitariness of man, which God had namely and principally ordered to prevent by marriage, hath no remedy, but lies under a worse condition than the loneliest single life."*

But, it was urged against this and all similar reasoning, that Christ himself prohibited divorce, in those words, "whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder." Milton, however, regarded these words as furnishing a plain solution of the whole controversy in his favour.—

"When is it," he asks, "that God may be said to join. When the parties and their friends consent? No, surely, for that may concur to lewdest ends. Or is it when church rites are finished? neither; for the efficacy of these depends upon the presupposed fitness of either party. Perhaps after carnal knowledge: least of all; for that may join persons whom neither law nor nature dares join.

* *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Prose Works, p. 125

It is left, that only then when the minds are fitly disposed, and enabled to maintain a cheerful conversation, to the solace and love of each other, according as God intended and promised in the very first foundation of matrimony; I will make him a help-meet for him; for surely what God intended and promised, that only can be thought to be his joining, and not the contrary. So likewise the apostle witnesseth, 1 Corinthians vii. 15, that in marriage 'God hath called us to peace.' And doubtless in what respect he hath called us to marriage, in that also he hath joined us. The next, whom either disproportion or deadness of spirit, or something distasteful and averse in the inimitable bent of nature renders unconjugal, error may have joined, but God never joined against the meaning of his own ordinance. And if he joined them not, then is there no power above their own consent to hinder them from unjoining, when they cannot reap the soberest ends of being together in any tolerable sort. Neither can it be said properly, that such twain were ever divorced, but only parted from each other, as two persons unconjunctive are unmarriable together. But if, whom God hath made a fit help, frowardness or private injuries hath made unfit, that being the secret of marriage, God can better judge than man, neither is man indeed fit or able to decide this matter: however it be, undoubtedly a peaceful divorce is a less evil, and less in scandal than hateful, hard-hearted, and destructive continuance of marriage in the judgment of Moses and of Christ, that justifies him in choosing the less evil; which if it were an honest and civil prudence in the law, what is there in the gospel forbidding such a kind of legal wisdom, though we should admit the common expositors?"⁶

Milton had now, most learnedly and laboriously,

⁶ *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Prose Works, p. 150.*

avowed and vindicated his opinions upon this serious subject, which he rightly deemed to be one of the very first importance in its relations to social and domestic life; and he was about to act upon the principle he had asserted, when an event occurred which changed his purpose, and materially affected him during the whole residue of his life. He had a keen relish for the felicities of domestic life, which even the ill-usage of his wife had failed to repress; and he now thought seriously of seeking the solaces and comforts of the marriage state. He preferred his addresses to a beautiful and accomplished young lady, the daughter of a doctor Davis, who entertained his suit, and consented to become his wife. The projected marriage was talked about, and his former wife's friends, on whom Fortune had now turned her back, became as anxious to procure a reconciliation, as, in the days of their success and pride, they had been to produce a separation between them. Their conduct was as pusillanimous as it was unprincipled; but they nevertheless succeeded in their object, the plan of which was very ingeniously contrived and executed. Combining with Milton's friends, who concurred in the wish for a reconciliation between the pair who had been united at the altar, they watched his visits, and as he was in the house of a relation, they stationed his wife in an inner apartment, with instructions to appear at the proper time, and to supplicate for his pardon on her knees: she enacted her part well; throwing herself at his feet, she confessed her fault, and with tears intreated his forgiveness. Milton appeared to be inexorable for a moment; but his firmness soon gave way, and yielding to the more generous emotions of his nature, he raised her from the ground, consented to forget the past, and took her home to his bosom and affections. His magnanimity and generosity extended still further than this—even to those who

had been the cause of his disappointment and unhappiness. The parents of his wife, with others of their children, were added to his family, and supported by the fruits of his labours, until his influence and exertions availed to obtain for them a partial return of fortune. A conduct so noble and generous can never be sufficiently admired.

During the same year that Milton published his elaborate works on Divorce, he also published a Tractate on Education, addressed to "Master Samuel Hartlib." / Notwithstanding the sneers of Johnson, and other ushers and schoolmasters, at this noble scheme, we do hope that the country will, at no distant period, realize it. The plan is not for private individuals to attempt to carry into effect; but an enlightened government, with the vast collegiate resources of England at its disposal, might, without injuring existing establishments, place an academical institute on this ideal platform in every county.* The object of Milton was to demonstrate the folly of devoting seven or eight years of the life of youth to the "scraping together of so much miserable Latin and Greek as might be learned otherwise easily and delightfully in one year;" and to shew that it was practicable to initiate the young student into science and language by the same process, making an acquaintance with *things* the immediate result of an acquaintance with *words*. Between the years of twelve and twenty, the pupil, in the schools recommended, was to be led through various languages, from grammar to ethics, logic, rhetoric, politics, law, theology, criticism, and composition. Geography was to exhibit to him the surface of the globe, and astronomy to unfold the heavens: natural philosophy, comprehending anatomy and physiology, was to make him conversant with the pheno-

* Fletcher, p. xxI.

mena of nature, and with the wonders of his own frame: the mathematics were to introduce him to the sciences of architecture, enginry or gunnery, fortification, and navigation; and, on his issuing into the world from one of these schools, he was to be accomplished for any duty, to which his country might summon him, in the pulpit or at the bar, in the senate or in the field. During the course of these studies, which were to visit every region of science, the body of the student was to receive its share of cultivation, to be maintained in health by temperance, and to be invigorated by exertion. The exercises directed on this occasion were to be of a military nature, to instruct the youth in the exact use of their weapons, and in the rudiments of their soldiership. After exercise and meals, their spirits were to be recreated and composed with "solemn and divine harmonies of music" heard or learnt; and their minds sent back to study in "good tune and satisfaction."

Milton had contributed pre-eminently to humiliate the prelacy and abridge its power; but the presbyterians, who had now attained the ascendancy, exhibited precisely the same hankering after "the Mammon of unrighteousness," and the same intolerant disposition as the episcopilians had done. Like all other rulers whose object is to abridge the liberties of the people and maintain their own bad eminence, their first care was to restrain the press. They revived the *imprimatur* of the star-chamber, and expurgated every book of every word or phrase which accorded not with their taste. This monstrous grievance, at once the evidence and the cause of so much mischief, Milton now stepped forward to combat; and never did man perform a task more ably, whether by eloquence or argument, or the more felicitous combination of both, than he did in his "Areopagitica: a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing; addressed to the Parliament of

England." Sir Egerton Brydges avers, that as soon as Milton descended from his poetic throne, to take part in "the coarse conflict of practical affairs," the happy delirium of glorious genius subsided into a cold and harsh stagnation of all that was eloquent and generous.* Did he ever read this Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing? If he did not, what are we to think of his fidelity as a biographer or his judgment as a critic, in hazarding such an assertion; if he had read this speech, then what are we to think of his taste and discrimination, when he happens to be under the influence of political feelings?

It is difficult to select where all is sterling and beautiful: but those who peruse the following passages will be, no doubt, excited to a perusal of the whole composition, which is one of Milton's finest productions.†

"It is not denied, but gladly confessed, we are to send our thanks and vows to Heaven, louder than most of nations, for that great measure of truth which we enjoy, especially in those main points between us and the pope, with his appurtenances the prelates: but he who thinks we are to pitch our tent here, and have attained the utmost prospect of reformation, that the mortal glass wherein we contemplate can shew us, till we come to beatific vision; that man by this very opinion declares, that he is yet far short of truth. Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good

* Life, p. 68.

† The publisher of this Memoir of Milton, has issued a cheap and handsome edition of the "Speech."

Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, lords and commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming; he shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection. Suffer not these licensing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity, forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyred saint. We boast our light: but if we look not wisely on the sun itself, it smites us into darkness. Who can discern those planets that are oft combust, and those stars of brightest magnitude, that rise and set with the sun, until the opposite motion of their orbs bring them to such a place in the firmament, where they may be seen evening or morning? The light which we have gained, was given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge. It is not the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitring of a bishop, and the removing him from off the presbyterian shoulders, that will make us a happy nation; no, if other things as great in the church, and in the rule of life both economical and political, be not looked into and reformed, we have looked so long upon the blaze that Zuinglius and Calvin have beaconed up to us, that we are stark blind. There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissent from their maxima. It is their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince, yet all must be suppressed which

is not found in their *Syntagma*. They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dis-severed picces, which are yet wanting to the body of Truth. To be still searching what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it, (for all her body is homogeneal, and proportional,) this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a church; not the forced and outward union, of cold, and neutral, and inwardly divided minds.”*

“ Next, it is a lively and cheerful presage of our happy success and victory. For as in a body when the blood is fresh, the spirits pure and vigorous, not only to vital, but to rational faculties, and those in the acutest and the pertest operations of wit and subtlety, it argues in what good plight and constitution the body is; so when the cheerfulness of the people is so sprightly up, as that it has not only wherewith to guard well its own freedom and safety, but to spare, and to bestow upon the solidest and sublimest points of controversy and new invention, it betokens us not degenerated, nor drooping to a fatal decay, by casting off the old and wrinkled skin of corruption to outlive these pangs, and wax young again, entering the glorious ways of truth and prosperous virtue, destined to become great and honourable in these latter ages. Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation, rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks; methinks I see her as an eagle muing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds,

* *Prose Works*, p. 115.

with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.”*

“ And now the time in special is, by privilege to write and speak what may help to the further discussing of matters in agitation. The temple of Janus, with his two controversial faces, might now not unsignificantly be set open. And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter? Iller confuting is the best and surest suppressing. He who hears what praying there is for light and clear knowledge to be sent down among us, would think of other matters to be constituted beyond the discipline of Geneva, framed and fabricked already to our hands. Yet when the new light which we beg for shines in upon us, there be who envy and oppose, if it come not first in at their casements. What a collusion is this, when as we are exhorted by the wise man to use diligence, ‘to seek for wisdom as for hidden treasures,’ early and late, that another order shall enjoin us to know nothing but by statute? When a man hath been labouring the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage, drawn forth his reasons as it were a battle ranged, scattered and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he please, only that he may try the matter by dint of argument; for his opponents then to sculk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be

* *Fraser Works*, p. 116.

valour enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of Truth. For who knows not that Truth is strong, next to the Almighty ; she needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious ; those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power : give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not true, as the old Proteus did, who spake oracles only when he was caught and bound, but then rather she turns herself into all shapes, except her own, and perhaps tunes her voice according to the time, as Micaiah did before Ahab, until she be adjured into her own likeness."*

Mr. Fletcher says of this composition,† that "it is modelled after the classical examples of the Greek rhetors. It is thoroughly Grecian—the motto is taken from his favourite Euripides, and happily translated by himself . . . James Thomson, author of the 'Seasons,' published an octavo edition of it in 1738, when the freedom of the press was considered in danger ; and in this poet's 'Liberty,' the art of printing is celebrated with elaborate praise. John Milton was the first man who asserted the liberty of unlicensed printing. The subject called forth all his powers, and he appears to have written every word under the impression, that every word would be weighed and read, not only by the statesmen whom he addressed, but by those of succeeding ages. Its importance, and the most illustrious tribunal before which he pleaded, never daunted him, but while he approached the august assemblage with the mien and countenance of a freeman, his discourse is at once rhetorical and deliberative, blending the fire of the orator with the wisdom of the sage. The 'quid deceit' is most admirably observed. He was

* Prose Works, p. 117.

† Introductory Review, pp. xxI. xxII.

pleading before no rabble—the greatest geniuses for government which the world ever saw, were the arbiters of his eloquence: men who had been triumphant in battle, and were mighty in council. The vehemence, the disdain, the terrible wrath of controversy, disappear, and in their stead we have such an exquisite union and interpenetration of the sublime and the pathetic, of the passionate and the rational, of persuasion and argument, of subdued ecstasy and sober energy, of religion, and philosophy, and policy, all involved in a copious stream of such a wonderful language as never before, and certainly never since, poured from the lips of ancient or of modern oratory. With the exception of the historical digressions, it is, perhaps, faultless, and they will be excused, when it is remembered that he stood alone,—and, as Bacon said of Luther, he was obliged, in his solitude, to make a party of antiquity against his own time. . . . The topics which he urges, embrace the whole controversy, and are exhausted. The collateral excursions from the main positions of his argument, are, as usual, profoundly instructive, and incomparably beautiful. Toleration of all opinions is the grand centre to which all the lines of illustration and of exposition point, and in which they all harmoniously meet. The bare question of licensing, is apparently a dry one—but his digressions embrace a most comprehensive circuit. The Areopagitica is a fine illustration of that wonderful aggressive vigour, by which the author's possession of the most inconsiderable position becomes a key to the most splendid conquest—the pass of triumph—the *punctum saliens*, whence,

‘In mighty quadrate joined
Of union irresistible, move on
In silence his bright legions.’

“ It is John Milton's master-piece, and he thus writes of it: ‘ Lastly, I wrote my Areopagitica, on

the model of a set speech, in order to relieve the press from the restraints with which it was encumbered, that the power of determining what was true and what was false, what ought to be published, and what to be suppressed, might no longer be entrusted to a few illiterate and illiberal individuals, who refused their sanction to any work which contained views or sentiments at all above the level of the vulgar superstition.'"

The eloquent and powerful reasoning of Milton was, however, in vain: the presbyterians knew too well the utility of a censorship to be moved by anything that could be urged against it; and the Areopagitica urged its suit to no purpose. But if the parliament was unmoved by it, it produced a powerful effect upon individual minds. Gilbert Mabbott, one of the licensers, resigned his situation, from a conviction of its incompatibility with truth and liberty; and Cromwell appears to have been so moved by it, that during his protectorate he abolished the censorship.

What would Milton have said to our modern improvements upon the censorship, by the aid of which the freedom of political discussion has been almost as effectually restrained as it could be by the diligence of the licenser. The newspaper stamp duty, the bonds required from proprietors and publishers to abstain from the publication of every thing "calculated to bring the king, the church, or either house of parliament into contempt," and the vague but comprehensive law of libel—constituting anything which, for any reason, displeases anybody, a libel, have been found efficient substitutes in the hands of illiberal governments for the old and obnoxious licensing system. In theory, the press of England is unfettered and unrestrained; so that

— "free-born men,
Having to advise the public, may speak free;"

but let any one, mistaking theory for practice, assume this exercise of the right of a "free-born man," and if he do not fall into the hands of the attorney - general, it will be owing solely to the growing strength of public opinion, and not to any protection which the law affords him. Is not the following eloquent passage as applicable to that execrable law which prohibits the publication of a newspaper by any man who has not entered into a bond, under heavy recognizances, to refrain from writing upon political topics, excepting under certain restrictions, and to put into circulation no paper which has not paid a tax to the state, and had impressed upon its front the certificate of its legality by the commissioners of the stamp-office, as it was to that species of censorship with which Milton waged war ; and can it be doubted, therefore, that he would have poured forth his eloquence against this as servidly as he did against that ?

"Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopolized and traded in by tickets, and statutes, and standards. We must not think to make a staple commodity of all the knowledge in the land, to mark and license it like our broad cloth and our woolpacks. What is it but a servitude like that imposed by the Philistines, not to be allowed the sharpening of our own axes and coulters, but we must repair from all quarters to twenty licensing forges ? Had any one written and divulged erroneous things and scandalous to honest life, misusing and forfeiting the esteem had of his reason among men, if after conviction this only censure were adjudged him, that he should never henceforth write, but what were first examined by an appointed officer, whose hand should be annexed to pass his credit for him, that now he might be safely read ; it could not be apprehended less than a disgraceful punishment. Whence to include the whole nation, and those that never yet thus offended, under such

a dissident and suspectful prohibition, may plainly be understood what a disparagement it is. So much the more when as debtors and delinquents may walk abroad without a keeper, but unoffensive books must not stir forth without a visible jailor in their title. Nor is it to the common people less than a reproach; for if we be so jealous over them, as that we dare not trust them with an English pamphlet, what do we but censure them for a giddy, vicious, and ungrounded people; in such a sick and weak state of faith and discretion, as to be able to take nothing down but through the pipe of a licenser? That this is care or love of them, we cannot pretend, when as in those popish places, where the laity are most hated and despised, the same strictness is used over them. Wisdom we cannot call it, because it stops but one breach of licence, nor that neither: when as those corruptions, which it seeks to prevent, break in faster at other doors, which cannot be shut.”*

Milton’s return to domestic repose and tranquillity appears greatly to have soothed his mind, and to have revived those softer and more genial feelings which overflow in conference with the Muses. In 1654, he prepared an edition of his miscellaneous poems in English, Latin, and Italian, which was published by Humphrey Moseley. It does not comport with the object of this memoir to dwell upon these compositions of our author; suffice it to say, that amongst them are several of his happiest efforts—the outpourings of a great and truth-loving soul—exhibiting an extraordinary combination of the elevated and powerful with the tender and the graceful.

In 1646, Mrs. Milton gave birth to her first child, afterwards named Anne; and in the following year Milton’s father, who had been residing with

* *Prose Works*, p. 113.

him, died, and the Powells left him "to return to their former residence in the country." Toland, speaking of this period, says, "And now, both his own father dying, and his wife's relations returning to their several habitations, he revived his academic institution of some young gentlemen, with a design, perhaps, of putting in practice the model of education lately published by himself; yet this course was of no long continuance, for he was to have been, in 1647, made adjutant-general to Sir William Waller, but that the new modelling of the army soon following, and Sir William turning cat-in-pan, this design was frustrated."

In 1648, Milton's second daughter, Mary, was born, and soon afterwards the course of public events introduced him into an honourable and important office in the state. The political occurrences of this period, so intimately connected with the history of Milton, are briefly and lucidly described by Symmons; and as they will throw a desirable light upon much of his subsequent career, we transcribe what that biographer has written.

"The victory of Naseby, gained on the 14th of June, 1645, by the army under Fairfax and Cromwell, may be considered as having terminated the war between the parliament and Charles, a civil war honourably distinguished from every other by the general benignity of its spirit, and the admirable moderation of the victor. From the moment of this defeat, the unhappy monarch was, in truth, in the possession of his enemies; and he passed the few months, which intervened before his surrender to the Scots, in a species of captivity at Oxford.

"In the April of the following year, he fled to the army of the Scots before Newark, under the command of the Earl of Leven, by whom he was detained as a prisoner, and, in no long time, was delivered to the commissioners of the parliament.

By them he was conducted to Holmby,^{*} or Holdenby House, in Northamptonshire; where he remained in easy, if not in honourable, confinement, till he was seized in the following June, by the army; and after some removals was settled by them, in a state of delusive liberty and splendour, at Hampton Court.

"At this crisis of his fate, he was presented with an opportunity of recovering his fallen fortunes, and replacing himself on the throne. The presbyterians, now in the fulness of their power, with the parliament, the City of London, and the Scots at their command, thought it no longer necessary to continue that disguise which had hitherto imperfectly concealed their principles from the world. They openly avowed themselves the enemies of toleration; and their victorious army, composed of independents and various sectarists, began to discover that they had lavished their blood only to substitute one tyranny for another, and had conquered merely for their own ruin. In this exigence they preferred petitions and remonstrances to the parliament, and on the failure of these legal weapons, under the impulse of resentment and despair, they resorted to violence, and destroyed the presbyterian power, the government, and themselves. . . . †

"These events, however, though just at hand, were not as yet disclosed or even foreseen; and Ireton and Cromwell, uncertain of the result of the contest with the presbyterians, made an offer to Charles, while he was in their power at Hampton Court, to reinstate him in his royalties, on certain conditions, for which they stipulated in behalf of

• Feb. 6, 1646-7.

† We have omitted a few lines here, containing an expression of political opinion. Had we inserted it, it would have devolved upon us the necessity of controverting it, without any benefit to the reader.

themselves and their friends.* But the infatuated prince, under the influence of weak and interested advisers, and elated by a strange opinion of his own essential importance amid the violent conflict of parties, rejected the proffers of his fortune; and even offended those by whom they were made, with his haughtiness, his fluctuation, and his duplicity.† When they found, by the discovery of his secret correspondence with the queen, that no reliance was to be placed on his good faith, Ireton and Cromwell seem to have determined on his destruction;‡ and, withdrawing their protection, they

* There can be no doubt that Cromwell and Ireton, disgusted equally with the imbecility and the arbitrary proceedings of the presbyterian parliament, and lamenting the unsightly state of the nation, were animated by the best of all motives in their overtures to the king. Their stipulations for "the settlement of the nation" shew the precautions they had taken to prevent a return of arbitrary government, in the event of the king accepting their offer. It was proposed that the representation of the House of Commons should be reformed, by disfranchising all decayed or inconsiderable boroughs, and increasing the number of members for counties, so as to render the House, as near as might be, an equal representation of the whole kingdom. It was proposed that parliaments should be biennial, and that no dissolution should take place till after they had sat a certain time; namely, one hundred and twenty days. It was next proposed to maintain the Hierarchy, merely deprived of its powers of coercion, and to put the English clergy and Scotch covenant on the same footing. Thus, the grand obstacle to an accommodation with the King, arising out of the parliament's insisting on the establishment of the presbyterian mode of worship, instead of the episcopal church, was removed; and liberty of conscience was provided for. The number of royalists excepted from pardon was only five, and the remainder were allowed to compound for their estates, upon terms far more favourable than those which had been fixed by the parliament. It was, however, very properly stipulated that none of the royalists should be allowed to sit in the first parliament. It was further proposed, that the command of the army and navy should be restored to the crown, at the expiration of ten years.—There appears upon the face of these propositions, a fair and honest endeavour to effect an amicable settlement, if possible, of the national differences, by meeting the king's principal objections to an accommodation, on the one hand; and by providing securities for a responsible government on the other.

† Among other things, he said, he was persuaded that it was in his power to turn the scale, and that the party must sink which he abandoned; and he told those who brought to him the offers of the army, "I shall see you glad ere long to accept more equal terms. You cannot be without me: you will fall to ruin, if I do not sustain you."—RUSHWORTH.

‡ We differ entirely from Symmons in this view of the conduct of Cromwell and Ireton. If Cromwell, indeed, subsequently became desirous of Charles' removal, and even that is very doubtful, the

compelled him, for his immediate preservation to fly from Hampton Court in quest of another asylum. This he sought, but, instead of it, he unfortunately found a much more certain and rigorous prison in the Isle of Wight; where he experienced a close confinement for nearly a twelve-month in Carisbrooke Castle.

"Even here, however, fortune seemed again disposed to redress her former wrongs to him, and to give him back, by treaty, a large part, at least, of what she had ravished from him by arms. But his fatal obstinacy finally repulsed her, and the persuasion, from which all his past experience could not reclaim him, of the consequence of a dethroned and captive king, induced him to throw away the last mean of safety. The difficulties which he interposed protracting the negotiation between him and the parliament, the army gained time to return from their victorious expedition against the Scots, and to concert their measures against their common enemies, the presbyterians and himself."*

It was necessary to determine something with regard to the king, for as long as he remained to be a bone of contention for the different parties to fight about, there could be no hope of peace. Charles, as we have said, refused the proposals of the army with scorn, his object being, as Mrs.

desire was produced by a number of concurring circumstances which he could not control, and which must have terminated in his own death, with the overthrow of the popular cause, or as they did, in the destruction of the king. Cromwell's detection of the king's duplicity, who while he was soliciting the aid of the army, was prosecuting a plan for introducing the Scots into England with a numerous force, which was to be joined not only by the royalists but also by the presbyterians in parliament—who dreaded and hated Cromwell more than they did Charles—in which plan Cromwell and his friends were to be sacrificed—no doubt destroyed all the General's sympathy with the king, and extinguished all desire to restore him to the throne; but throughout all the subsequent proceedings in reference to the king, Cromwell appears to have been little more than an assenting party. Upon this subject the reader may consult Hallam, vol. II. p. 63, and Lingard, vol. VI. p. 589.

* Symmons' Life of Milton, pp. 286—290.

Hutchinson, has remarked,* “to prevail by means of the different factions, and regain by art, what he had lost in fight.” It was evident that all accommodation with him, upon reasonable terms, was impossible. But, the difficulty was to know how to dispose of his person, after he should have been excluded from the throne. The nation was torn in pieces by opposite factions, each of which was desirous to use the king for the purpose of attaining its own object. If the king should be banished from the country, he was likely to return, as soon as he saw any prospect of successfully urging his pretensions; and if he were detained in prison within the kingdom, the very possibility of his future escape would help to keep alive faction, and to foster and extend intrigue. His death thus seemed to be rendered inevitable, as the only means of restoring public tranquillity and repose, and giving security and stability to whatever government the nation should think proper to adopt. The army therefore demanded his death, and did what they deemed to be a little wrong, to do a great right. The presbyterians in the parliament would have joined the king to defeat and destroy the army; the latter had therefore no alternative, but to have recourse to violent measures, for getting rid of their antagonists. The persons of all the leading presbyterians were seized and committed to prison; and ultimately the king was tried before the parliament, thus reduced, and condemned to death as a traitor.

On the 30th of January, 1648, he was put to death, in pursuance of the sentence passed upon him, for having “traitorously and maliciously imagined and contrived the enslaving or destroying of the English nation.”

Hitherto Milton had taken no part in the con-

* *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, p. 279.

troversy in which the king, the parliament, and the army were the parties; his object had been to promulgate those principles, and advocate those measures, that were essentially identified with good government, under whatever form such government might exist. Now, however, his services were required in behalf of those who had put the king to death. Speaking of this, he says, "Neither did I write anything respecting the regal jurisdiction, till the king, proclaimed an enemy by the senate and overcome in arms, was brought captive to his trial and condemned to suffer death. When indeed some of the presbyterian leaders, lately the most inveterately hostile to Charles, but now irritated by the prevalence of the independents in the nation and the senate, and stung with resentment, not of the fact, but of their own want of power to commit it, exclaimed against the sentence of the parliament upon the king, and raised what commotions they could, by daring to assert that the doctrine of the protestant divines, and of all the reformed churches, was strong in reprobation of this severity to kings, then at length I conceived it to be my duty publicly to oppose so much obvious and palpable falsehood." The object and manner of the work in which he handled this subject, is thus described, "Neither then did I direct my argument or persuasion personally against Charles, but by the testimony of many of the most eminent divines, I proved what course of conduct might lawfully be observed towards tyrants in general; and, with the zeal almost of a preacher, I attacked the strange ignorance or the wonderful impudence of these men, who had lately amused us with the promise of better things. This work was not published till after the death of the king: and was written rather to tranquillize the minds of men, than to discuss any part of the question respecting Charles, a question, the discussion of which belonged to the

magistrate and not to me, and which had now received its final determination."*

The work referred to in this passage was written and published in the February after the king's death; its title was "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates: proving that it is lawful, and hath been held so through all ages, for any, who have the power, to call to account a tyrant, or wicked king, and, after due conviction, to depose, and put him to death; if the ordinary magistrate have neglected, or denied to do it. And that they, who of late so much blame deposing, are the men that did it themselves."

Sir Egerton Brydges' remark here, is worth transcribing. He says, "The very title of this treatise is surely in the highest degree objectionable, and does not in these days require any refutation[?] To say the truth, this is a part of Milton's character which puzzles me—and no other. *This bloodthirstiness* does not agree with his sanctity, and other mental and moral qualities. I will not say that kings may not be deposed: but Charles I. ought not to have been deposed, much less put to death. In the poet, however, posterity has forgotten the regicide."†

How strangely do political predilections sometimes pervert men's judgments, and modify and change the character of every object at which they look! Would the king-loving baronet denounce the execution of a regicide or a manslayer, as proof of *murder* and *bloodthirstiness*; or is it only when execution is done upon kings and magistrates that his sympathy is called forth and his piety awakened? If he deprecate all taking away of human life, for whatever offence, then indeed we have no controversy with him; but we deny his right—so long as

* *Defensio Secunda, and Prose Works*, p. 720.

† *Life of Milton*, p. 108.

the present usage of treating murderers shall be universally tolerated and practised,—to impute bloodthirsty propensities to all those who happen to approve of the usage as an awful exercise of the law, rendered necessary for the common good of society. But we do not believe that he goes to this extremity ; it is only the persons of kings that he holds to be sacred and inviolable ;—a doctrine “ in the highest degree objectionable, and which does not in these days require any refutation” !

This—which was Milton’s first purely political work—is written with great acumen, much power of reasoning, and a considerable but not ostentatious display of learning. That kings and magistrates are amenable to the laws, and may be punished for the violation of them, is urged from the origin and constitution of society—the Jewish Scriptures—the most eminent Christian authors—and the practice of all civilised nations. It is a noble argument, conducted in a dignified and dispassionate spirit, and fortified by authorities to which those immediately addressed could not refuse their assent.

Having adverted to the natural quality of mankind, and to the origin of governors, kings, and magistrates, Milton thus speaks of the responsibility of these authorities.

“ It being thus manifest, that the power of kings and magistrates is nothing else, but what is only derivative, transferred and committed to them in trust from the people to the common good of them all, in whom the power yet remains fundamentally, and cannot be taken from them, without a violation of their natural birthrights ; and seeing that from hence Aristotle, and the best of political writers, have defined a king, ‘ *hini* who governs to the good and profit of his people, and not for his own ends,’ it follows from necessary causes, that the titles of sovereign lord, natural lord, and the like, are either arrogancies, or flatteries, not admitted by emperors

and kings of best note, and disliked by the church both of Jews (Isaiah xxvi. 13.) and ancient Christians, as appears by Tertullian and others. Although generally the people of Asia, and with them the Jews also, especially since the time they chose a king against the advice and counsel of God, are noted by wise authors much inclined to slavery. Secondly, that to say, as is usual, the king hath as good right to his crown and dignity, as any man to his inheritance, is to make the subject no better than the king's slave, his chattel, or his possession that may be bought or sold: and doubtless, if hereditary title were sufficiently inquired, the best foundation of it would be found but either in courtesy or convenience. But suppose it to be of right hereditary, what can be more just and legal, if a subject for certain crimes be to forfeit by law from himself and posterity all his inheritance to the king, than that a king for crimes proportional should forfeit all his titles and inheritance to the people? Unless the people must be thought created all for him, he not for them, and they all in one body inferior to him single; which were a kind of treason against the dignity of mankind to affirm. Thirdly, it follows, that to say that kings are accountable to none but God, is the overturning of all law and government. For if they may refuse to give account, then all covenants made with them at coronation, all oaths are in vain, and mere mockeries; all laws which they swear to keep, made to no purpose: for if the king fear not God (as how many of them do not!) we hold then our lives and estates by the tenure of his mere grace and mercy, as from a God, not a mortal magistrate; a position that none but curst parasites or men besotted would maintain! Aristotle therefore, whom we commonly allow for one of the best interpreters of nature and morality, writes in the fourth of his *Politics*, chap. x. that 'monarchy unaccountable, is the worst sort of

tyranny, and least of all to be endured by free-born men."*

Again he says,

"A tyrant, whether by wrong or by right, coming to the crown, is he who, regarding neither law nor the common good, reigns only for himself and his faction: thus, St. Basil among others defines him. And because his power is great, his will boundless and exorbitant, the fulfilling whereof is for the most part accompanied with innumerable wrongs and oppressions of the people, murders, massacres, rapes, adulteries, desolation, and subversion of cities and whole provinces; look how great a good and happiness a just king is, so great a mischief is a tyrant; as he the public father of his country, so this the common enemy. Against whom what the people lawfully may do, as against a common pest, and destroyer of mankind, I suppose no man of clear judgment need go further to be guided than by the very principles of nature in him."†

Further on he returns to the same topic—

"Surely they that shall boast, as we do, to be a free nation, and not have in themselves the power to remove or to abolish any governor supreme, or subordinate, with the government itself upon urgent causes, may please their fancy with a ridiculous and painted freedom, fit to cozen babies; but are indeed under tyranny and servitude; as wanting that power, which is the root and source of all liberty, to dispose and economize in the land which God hath given them, as masters of family in their own house and free inheritances, without which natural and essential power of a free nation, though bearing high their heads, they can in due esteem be thought no better than slaves and vassals, born in the tenure and occupation of another inheriting lord; whose government, though not illegal or

* Prose Works, pp. 233, 234.

† Ibid, p. 235.

intolerable, hangs over them as a lordly scourge, not as a free government; and therefore to be abrogated. How much more justly then may they fling off tyranny, or tyrants; who being once deposed, can be no more than private men, as subject to the reach of judgment and arraignment as other transgressors? And certainly if men, not to speak of heathen, both wise and religious, have done justice upon tyrants what way they could soonest, how much more mild and humane then is it, to give them fair and open trial; to teach lawless kings, and all who so much adore them, that not mortal man, or his imperious will, but justice, is the only true sovereign and supreme majesty upon earth? Let men cease, therefore, out of faction and hypoerisy, to make outcries and horrid things of things so just and honourable. Though, perhaps, till now no protestant state or kingdom can be alleged to have openly put to death their king, which lately some have written, and imputed to their great glory; much mistaking the matter. It is not, neither ought to be, the glory of a protestant state, never to have put their king to death; it is the glory of a protestant king never to have deserved death.”*

To those who, like Sir Egerton Brydges, admit that *tyrants* may lawfully be resisted, but that “Charles I. ought not to have been deposed, and much less put to death,” he answers—

“ Who in particular is a tyrant, cannot be determined in a general discourse, otherwise than by supposition; his particular charge, and the sufficient proof of it, must determine that; which I leave to magistrates, at least to the uprighter sort of them, and of the people, though in number less by many, in whom faction least hath prevailed above the law of nature and right reason, to judge as they

* Prose Works, p. 241.

find cause. But this I dare own as part of my faith, that if such a one there be, by whose commission whole massacres have been committed on his faithful subjects, his provinces offered to pawn or alienation, as the hire of those whom he had solicited to come in and destroy whole cities and countries; be he king, or tyrant, or emperor, the sword of justice is above him; in whose hand soever is found sufficient power to avenge the effusion, and so great a deluge of innocent blood. For if all human power to execute, not accidentally, but intendedly, the wrath of God upon evil-doers without exception, be of God; then that power, whether ordinarily, or if that fail, extraordinarily, so executing that intent of God, is lawful, and not to be resisted.”*

His reasoning with those who pervert the Scriptures so as to make them countenance the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance, is admirable; and may serve other purposes than that of defending the deposition and execution of a tyrannous king. He says,

“ Kingdom and magistracy, whether supreme or subordinate, is called ‘a human ordinance’ (1 Peter ii. 13, &c); which we are there taught is the will of God we should submit to, so far as for the punishment of evil-doers, and the encouragement of those that do well. ‘Submit,’ saith he, ‘as free-men.’ ‘But to any civil power unaccountable, unquestionable, and not to be resisted, no not in wickedness, and violent actions, how can we submit as free-men?’ ‘There is no power but of God,’ saith Paul, Romans xiii. as much as to say, God put it into man’s heart to find out that way at first for common peace and preservation, approving the exercise thereof; else it contradicts Peter, who calls the same authority an ordinance of man.’ It must

* *Works*, pp. 232, 233.

we read of great power in the affairs of kingdoms of the world permitted to the devil: for saith he to Christ, Luke iv. 6, all this power will I give thee, and the glory of them, for it is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it: neither did he lie, or Christ gainsay what he affirmed; for in the thirteenth of the Revelation, we read how the dragon gave to the beast his power, his seat, and great authority, which beast, so authorised, most expound to be the tyrannical powers and kingdoms of the earth. Therefore St. Paul, in the forecited chapter, tells us, that such magistrates he means, as are not a terror to the good, but to the evil, such as bear not the sword in vain, but to punish offenders, and to encourage the good. If such only be mentioned here as powers to be obeyed, and our submission to them only required, then doubtless those powers that do the contrary, are no powers ordained of God; and by consequence no obligation laid upon us to obey or not to resist them. And it may be well observed, that both these apostles, whenever they give this precept, express it in terms not concrete, but abstract, as logicians are wont to speak; that is, they mention the ordinance, the power, the authority, before the persons that execute it; and what that power is, lest we should be deceived, they describe exactly. So that if the power be not such, or the person execute not such power, neither the one nor the other is of God, but of the devil, and by consequence to be resisted."*

The presbyterians, whose cause Milton had originally espoused, and on behalf of which he had done such signal service, had now completely thrown off the mask; and to all their other vices had added that of hypocrisy in reference to the king. So long as they hoped to serve themselves

* Prose Works, p. 235.

be also understood of lawful and just power, else by doing so, they had been amongst the fiercest of the king's enemies; but now that they found the independents—who were for an universal freedom in religious matters—to be the stronger, they joined with the royalists, and denounced the execution of Charles as a murder little short of blasphemous, and exposing its authors to the vengeance of heaven. Milton did not spare these men. He says,

“Nor let any man be deluded by either the ignorance, or the dangerous hypocrisy and self-repugnance, of our dancing divines, who have the conscience and the boldness to come with Scripture in their mouths, glossed and fitted for their turns with a double contradictory sense, transforming the sacred verity of God to an idol with two faces, looking at once two several ways; and with the same quotations to charge others, which in the same case they made to justify themselves. For while the hope to be made classic and provincial lords led them on, while pluralities greased them thick and deep, to the shame and scandal of religion, more than all the sects and heresies they exclaim against; then to fight against the king's person, and no less a party of his lords and commons, or to put force upon both the houses, was good, was lawful, was no resisting of superior powers; they only were powers not to be resisted, who countenanced the good and punished the evil. But now that their censorious domineering is not suffered to be universal, truth and conscience to be freed, tithes and pluralities to be no more, though competent allowance provided, and the warm experience of large gifts, and they so good at taking them; yet now to exclude and seize upon impeached members, to bring delinquents without exemption to a fair tribunal, by the common national law against murder, is now to be no less than Corah, Dathan, and Abiram. He who but ere-

while in the pulpits was a cursed tyrant, an enemy to God and saints, laden with all the innocent blood spilt in the three kingdoms, and so to be fought against; is now, though nothing penitent or altered from his first principles, a lawful magistrate, a sovereign lord, the Lord's anointed, not to be touched, though by themselves imprisoned. As if this only were obedience, to preserve the mere useless bulk of his person, and that only in prison, not in the field, not to disobey his commands, deny him his dignity and office, every where to resist his power, but where they think it only surviving in their own faction."

Again, he says, "Nor let them be discouraged or deterred by any new apostate scarecrows, who, under show of giving counsel, send out their basking monitories and mementoes, empty of aught else but the spleen of a frustrated faction. For how can that pretended counsel be either sound or faithful, when they that give it see not, for madness and vexation of their ends lost, that those statutes and scriptures, which both falsely and scandalously they wrest against their friends and associates, would by sentence of the common adversary fall first and heaviest upon their own heads? Neither let mild and tender dispositions be foolishly softened from their duty and perseverance with the unmasculine rhetoric of any puling priest or chaplain, sent as a friendly letter of advice, for fashion's sake in private, and forthwith published by the sender himself, that we may know how much of friend there was in it, to cast an odious envy upon them to whom it was pretended to be sent in charity."*

These extracts will shew the principles upon which Milton exposed the *jure dicino*, selfish, bigoted, sycophantic presbyterians, who cared not, it should seem, so that the system, whatever it was, "worked

well" for them, if all the other sects had perished by the *sword* of the magistrate, upon the ground of there "being no power but of God," and "those who resisted the power procured to themselves damnation." By putting the argument on the right footing, "the sovereignty of the people," Milton proved that it was the duty of the subject to *obey*, when the monarch governed by law, protecting his subjects; and their duty to *resist*, when the king, regarding neither the law nor the common good, reigned for himself alone.

Milton's next work was "Observations upon the Articles of Peace with the Irish Rebels, on the Letter of Ormond to Colonel Jones, and the Representation of the Scots Presbytery at Belfast." It is well known, says Mr. Fletcher, that Charles' league with the papists precipitated his ruin. The Irish rebels were (even in their horrid massacre of the protestants) called "the Queen's army." Thirteen-days after these articles of peace were concluded by his representative in Ireland, the king lost his head. Ireland was now the theatre of the royalist party, and with its rabble of papists, and the little presbytery of Belfast, and the remnant of its cavaliers, presented as motly a spectacle of selfish union for selfish ends as was ever seen. The independent army, and the genius of Cromwell, however, kept them in awe. The lively lieutenant of the "martyr," after all his loving "articles of agreement" with the murderers of protestants, and the novel friendship that had sprung up between him and the presbyterians, called in bribery to effect what force could not do, and accordingly wrote to Colonel Jones, as White-locke says, promising him great rewards to come to his obedience to the king. Ormond's letter is a very sprightly production, and though it had no effect on the veteran to whom he sent it, Milton seems to have been not a little nettled by it. Jones' reply is very characteristic of his party, and of the times. The

articles first come under examination, and are soon dispatched. Then this letter of Ormond's is spoiled of some of its sprightliness, and of all its haughtiness; and lastly, our author comes to deal with another sort of adversaries, in show far different, in substance somewhat the same. His remonstrance with the presbyterians is very powerful, and the style of the whole pamphlet is lucid and masculine, and remarkable for great terseness and compression.*

Milton now retired for a while, from the field of political warfare. His object never appears to have been to take a *leading* part in state affairs; his purpose was rather to aid and support those who, holding political principles in common with himself, were actively engaged in reforming and building up the commonwealth, and who, in this work, were exposed to the malignant assaults and busy intrigues of the rival factions. His last-mentioned publications had vindicated them from the reproaches and contumelies of their assailants, and they were now prosecuting with vigour, their undertaking of reconstructing the constitution. On the 8th of February, 1648, the Commons, after a long debate, resolved, without division, "That the House of Peers in Parliament is useless and dangerous, and ought to be abolished; and that an act be brought in for that purpose." The committee to whom the preparation of this bill was confided, were also required to consider, "How the subjects may have liberty to proceed against the persons or estates of peers, and their servants, for their just debts; and how far the peers may be made capable to elect, or be elected, as knights or burgesses." On the following day, they resolved, after a long debate, to abolish the monarchy, by adopting the following resolution: "That it hath been found by experi-

* Fletcher, Introductory Review, p. 24.
c. 2

ence, and this house doth declare, that the office of a king in this nation, and to have the power thereof in any single person, is unnecessary, burthensome, and dangerous to the liberty, safety, and public interest of the people of this nation; and therefore ought to be abolished." An act was ordered to be introduced for this purpose, by the committee which had been previously entrusted with the work of preparing the bill for abolishing the House of Peers. A council of state, consisting of forty persons, was also formed, and to this body was confided the executive government.

While these things were going on, Milton, as we have said, was pursuing his studies and literary avocations in private. Speaking of this period, and of his former controversial works, he says,

" Such were the fruits of my private studies, which I gratuitously presented to the church, and to the state, and for which I was recompensed by nothing but impunity, though the actions themselves procured me peace of conscience and the approbation of the good; while I exercised that freedom of discussion which I loved. Others, without labour or desert, got the possession of honours and emoluments; but no one ever knew me, either soliciting any thing myself, or through the medium of my friends; ever beheld me in a supplicating posture at the doors of the senate or the levees of the great. I usually kept myself secluded at home, where my own property, part of which had been withheld during the civil commotions, and part of which had been absorbed in the oppressive contributions which I had to sustain, afforded me a scanty subsistence. When I was released from these engagements, and thought that I was about to enjoy an interval of uninterrupted ease, I turned my thoughts to a history of my country, from the earliest times to the present period."

Milton commenced this history, but had only just completed four books of it, bringing down the events to the subjugation of North Wales by Egbert, when he was suddenly compelled to lay it aside for a time, in consequence of his appointment as secretary for foreign affairs to the council of state. Milton's profound knowledge of the Latin tongue, in which the council had determined to carry on all their correspondence with foreign states, and the elegance of his style, added to his extensive knowledge of history, and of the relations of modern states one to another, fitted him for such an office; and he discharged its duties in a way which commanded universal admiration and respect. The appointment was made on the 15th of March, 1648, and he at once gave himself up to his new avocation.

We have had occasion to speak of Sir Egerton Brydges' imperfect knowledge of Milton's character; but he has not exhibited this ignorance more strikingly in any part of his volume than in his remarks upon Milton's appointment as secretary to the council: "Whatever merit Milton might have in the able and learned discharge of his political services," says he, "it is deeply to be lamented that his brilliant and sublime faculties were so employed. He had a mind too creative to be wasted in writing down official dispatches, or turning them into classical Latin: humble talents would have done better for such laborious and technical tasks. How the slumbering fire of his rich and ever-varying fictions must have consumed his heart and his brain! How he must have fretted at the base intrigues of courts and councils, and the turpitude of human ambition! While immured within dark and close official walls, how he must have sighed and pined to be courting his splendid visions of a higher and more congenial world on the banks of some haunted stream! The

woods and forests, the mountains, seas, and lakes, ought to have been his dwelling-places. The whispers of the spring, or the roaring of the winter-winds, ought to have soothed or excited his spirits. In those regions aerial beings visit the earth; there the soul sees what the concourse of mankind puts to flight; there the mean passions that corrupt the human bosom, have no abode. To make a man of business requires nothing but petty and watchful observation, cold reserve, and selfish craft: to catch the moment when caution in others is asleep; to raise hopes, yet promise nothing; to seem to give full information, yet to be so vague, that every thing is open to escape. How can the poet practise such arts as these? He is lost in himself; he is wrapped up in his own creations."*

This is all beautifully poetical, excepting the last sentence, which is as illiberal as it is false; but the truth is, that Milton was not a mere poet; he did not—he could not live in the world of fiction, and sport with the mere abstractions of his own fertile brain. His heart was overflowing with human sympathy—it was full of love for his country and for mankind; he was not a man of mere *sentiment* but of *principle*; and though his soaring mind swept its way through "woods and forests"—over "mountains, seas, and lakes," and held converse with "those aerial beings who visit the earth" in regions where the busy and turbulent passions of men break not in upon the sublime stillness of nature, he was too deeply touched with the infirmities and the superinduced political and social maladies of his kind to suffer him to live in the world as though he were not of it. The appointment of Milton as Foreign Secretary to the Council of State, offered him an opportunity of rendering active and essential service to the republic, and

* Life of Milton, pp. 132, 133.

to the cause of humanity and liberty all over the world ; and he therefore entered upon the discharge of its duties with a zeal and fervour which wholly repudiate the assumptions of his poetic biographer ; and prosecuted those duties in a manner which is universally admitted to have commanded the respect and often the terror of Europe. Symmons says, "during his continuance in office, which was prolonged to the restoration, the state-papers in his department may be regarded as models in the class of diplomatic composition. They speak, indeed, the language of energy and wisdom ; and are entitled equally to the applause of the scholar and the statesman, they must have impressed foreign states with a high opinion of that government for which they were written, and in the service of which so much ability was engaged." "It may be observed," he adds, "that the character of their immediate author is too great to be altogether lost in that of the ministerial organ ; and that in many of them Milton may be traced in distinct, though not discordant, existence from the power for whom he acts."^{*}

Amongst the correspondence of Milton, during the Protectorate of Cromwell, were a series of letters addressed to the kings of France, Denmark, and Sweden, and other foreign princes and states, relative to the bloody persecution of the Piedmontese or Vaudois, by the Duke of Savoy, which may be referred to as among the finest state-papers, and the most felicitous compositions in the world ; their dignified yet conciliatory tone, the high-souled indignation which they breathe against the ruthless persecutor—the persuasivé eloquence employed to induce the intercession of his allies—and the fervent and touching sympathy expressed on behalf of the helpless victims of blind and super-

^{*} Life of Milton, p. 317

stigious vengeance, are certainly not to be equalled by any documents of a similar description.

But Milton's pen was not confined to the indicting of government dispatches or official correspondence. Soon after the execution of the king, a book purporting to be written by the "royal martyr," and entitled *EIKON BASILIKE*; or "the Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitude and Sufferings," made its appearance, and created a very powerful impression upon the public mind, to the prejudice of the republican cause. Milton, who had already proved himself so powerful in controversy, was invited to answer this work, and did so; his answer being published by authority, in 1649. There does not appear to have been any order in council directing him to write this answer: but his own words as to the direction are full and express. He says, "A book appeared soon after, which was ascribed to the king, and contained the most invidious charges against the parliament. *I was ORDERED to answer it;* and opposed the *ICONOCLAST* to the *Icon*."

It is certain that the royalists depended greatly upon the effect to be produced by *IKON BASILIKE*; forty-seven editions of it were circulated in England alone; and forty-eight thousand five hundred copies are said to have been sold. Milton felt that the peace and safety of the commonwealth were at stake, and he entered into his subject with his usual ardour, and completed it with even more than his ordinary success. The *ICONOCLAST*, or Image-breaker, is the most brilliant of his political writings in the mother tongue; and, at the crisis, must have produced a salutary reaction on the public mind. It was reprinted in 1650, and was published in French, by Du Gard in 1652. The hangman had the honour of burning it after the Restoration; but it had previously done the state some service.

The genuineness of the *IKON* has been a subject of fruitful controversy; but it is now set at rest.

There is no doubt that the use of the king's name was a fraud, and that the book was written by Dr. Garden, Bishop of Exeter. It was Milton's cue, however, to permit the imposture to pass, and deal with his antagonist as the royal personage he pretends to be.* To combat a king, was of all other employments, that which called forth the powerful energies of his mighty mind, and brought into full exercise the high-tried feelings of his intrepid heart. Pressing closely on his antagonist, and tracing him step by step, says Symmons,† it either exposes the fallacy of his reasoning, or the falsehood of his assertions, or the hollowness of his professions, or the convenient speciousness of his devotions. In argument and in style compressed and energetic, perspicuous and neat, it discovers a quickness which never misses an advantage, and a keenness of remark which carries an irresistible edge. It cannot be read by any man, whose reason is not wholly under the dominion of prejudice, without its enforcing a conviction unfavourable to the royal party; and it justly merited the honourable distinction, assigned to it by royalist vengeance, of burning in the same flames with the "Defence of the People of England."

The opening of the work exhibits great dignity of sentiment, and considerable excellence of composition.—

"To descant on the misfortunes of a person fallen from so high a dignity, who hath also paid his final debt both to nature and his faults, is neither of itself a thing commendable, nor the intention of this discourse. Neither was it fond ambition, nor the vanity to get a name, present or with posterity, by writing against a king. I never was so thirsty

* It is evident from several passages, that Milton strongly suspected that the *Icon* was the work of some "idle and pedantic" churchman.

† *Life of Milton*, p. 322.

after fame, nor so destitute of other hopes and means, better and more certain to attain it: for kings have gained glorious titles from their favourers by writing against private men, as Henry the Eighth did against Luther; but no man ever gained much honour by writing against a king, as not usually meeting with that force of argument in such courtly antagonists, which to convince might add to his reputation. Kings most commonly, though strong in legions, are but weak at arguments; as they who ever have accustomed from the cradle to use their will only as their right hand, their reason always as their left. Whence unexpectedly constrained to that kind of combat, they prove but weak and puny adversaries: nevertheless, for their sakes, who through custom, simplicity, or want of better teaching, have no more seriously considered kings, than in the gaudy name of majesty, and admire them and their doings as if they breathed not the same breath with other mortal men, I shall make no scruple to take up (for it seems to be the challenge both of him and all his party) to take up this gauntlet, though a king's, in the behalf of liberty and the commonwealth.*

This opening does not promise more than is to be found in the succeeding pages. "The martyr stands before us, exposed in all the deformity of his duplicity and despotism, smitten, blasted, and withered in the pitiless encounter: and yet there is not a single paragraph of unseemly exultation, or of wanton mockery or insult, over the fall of the monarch, throughout the secretary's vindication of the patriots. The tone of the mournful and majestic preface is always preserved. As so much *history*, the Iconoclast is invaluable."†

Milton had scarcely finished the ICONOCLAST, when he was forced into the lists against another

* Prose Works, pp. 273, 274.

† Fletcher, p. xxvii.

adversary, in the person of Claudius Salmasius, one of the professors in the University of Leyden, and a man famed for his learning.

Charles the Second was at this time protected in Holland, and being anxious to appeal to the world against the execution of his father, he employed the learned Frenchman to write a defence of the late king, and of monarchy. Salmasius had already distinguished himself by the publication of a book in defence of civil and religious liberty, and was, for his exertions in this good cause, in receipt of a pension from the republic of Holland. Strange it is that he should have consented to tarnish his fame and belie his principles at the entreaty or for the proffered reward of the intriguing and profligate prince; but he yielded to the persuasion, and, in 1649, produced his "Defencio Regia pro Carolo Primo ad Carolum Secundum." The States ordered the work to be suppressed, and the pension to its author to be discontinued.

The book was written in Latin—the appeal being to all Europe, and especially to the titled-heads thereof; and there is evidence beyond that furnished by the interference of the Dutch republic just mentioned, that it was not likely to be without its effect. The Council of State, at home, deemed it necessary to furnish an antidote to the poison thus introduced into the country, and it was resolved, "that Mr. Milton de prepare something in answer to the book of Salmasius, and when he hath done it, bring it to the council." This entry is under date January 8, 1649-50; and under December 23rd of the same year, there is another entry as follows:—"Ordered, that Mr. Milton do print the treatise which he hath written, in answer to a late book written by Salmasius, against the proceedings of the commonwealth."

Milton's sight was by this time greatly impaired, and he was forewarned of its total loss, if he should

continue his excessive application to study and writing; but with a magnanimity which must command the admiration of all men, he determined to labour for the good old cause, as he characterised it, until he should be rendered wholly incapable of doing any thing more. "I would not," says he, "have listened to the voice even of Esculapius himself from the shrine of Epidauris, in preference to the suggestions of the heavenly monitor within my breast; my resolution was unshaken, though the alternative was either the loss of my sight, or the desertion of my study; and I called to mind those two destinies, which the oracle of Delphi announced to the son of Thetis—

Two fates may lead me to the realms of night:
 If staying here, around Troy's walls I fight,
 To my dear home no more must I return;
 But lasting glory will adorn my urn.
 But if I withdraw from the martial strife,
 Short is my fame, but long will be my life.

II. ix.

I considered that many had purchased a less good by a greater evil, the meed of glory by the loss of life; but that I might procure great good by a little suffering; that though I am blind, I might still discharge the most honourable duties, the performance of which, as it is something more durable than glory, ought to be an object of superior admiration and esteem; I resolved, therefore, to make the short interval of sight, which was left me to enjoy, as beneficial as possible to the public interest."*

The work of Salmasius is no contemptible performance: it amasses nearly all that can be said in defence of monarchy: and Symmons points out a curious circumstance which is worth bringing under notice. "The circumstance which will principally recommend this work of Salmasius to

* Second Defence, Prose works, p. 927.

a numerous party in the present day," he remarks, "is the vivid recollection which it forcibly awakes, of some of the political writings of the late Mr. Burke. The same dark arsenal of language seems to have supplied the artillery, which in the seventeenth century was aimed at the government of England, and in the close of the eighteenth at that of France; and many of those doctrines which disgust us with their naked deformity in the pages of the Leyden professor, have been withdrawn from our detestation under an embroidered and sparkling veil by the hand of the British politician. When Salmasius calls upon the monarchs, and indeed upon all the well-instituted republics, or, in other words, the regular governments of Europe, to extirpate the fanatic and the parricide English—the peers and the monsters of Britain, we must necessarily be reminded of Mr. Burke's crusading zeal against the revolutionists of France; and be persuaded that he only blows the trumpet bequeathed to him by the antagonist of Milton, and sullied with the venal breath which was once purchased by Charles. Unquestionable resemblance is to be discovered in 'The Royal Defence' to those pieces of Mr. Burke's which respect the French revolution; and if the former were to be translated, the English reader would be less struck with the novelty of the latter: and more disposed to assent to what was asserted by the wise man more than three thousand years ago, that 'there is no new thing under the sun.' On the causes of this obvious likeness I will not presume to offer an opinion. Similar thoughts might be suggested by similar subjects, and the same passions, however excited, might naturally rush into the same channel of intemperate expression: or the expatiating mind of Mr. Burke might range even the moors of Salmasius to batten on their coarse produce; and, finding them replenished with bitter springs, might

be induced to draw from them to feed the luxuriancy of his invective."*

The immortal "Defence of the People of England," against Salmasius, more than answered the expectations that were entertained of it. The triumph of Milton was decisive, and the humiliation of his adversary complete. The critic whom we have just quoted says, "to speak of this composition in terms of too high praise would be difficult for its greatest admirer. If, happily, it had been a little less embittered with personal invective, and had withdrawn the two immediate combatants to a greater distance from our sight; if it had excluded every light and sportive sally from its pages, it would have approached very nearly to perfection, and would have formed one of the most able and satisfactory, the most eloquent and splendid defences of truth and liberty against sophistry and despotism, which has ever been exhibited to the world. Its diction, pure, spirited, and harmonious, is the adequate organ of strong argument, manly sentiment, comprehensive erudition, excursive fancy, and profound wisdom. By the laws of God, either written in our hearts or made the subject of immediate revelation; by the testimony of all history, sacred and profane, the 'Defence of the People of England' ascertains that political power properly emanates from the people, for whose good it must be exercised, and for whose good it may rightfully be resumed."†

The truth is, that Salmasius held a high reputation throughout Europe, and Milton condescended to fight him at all points with his own weapons. He "answered a fool according to his folly." When, in abusing the people of England, Salmasius imputed to them crimes of which they knew nothing, Milton retorted, by unmasking the calum-

* Life, pp. 357—359.

† Ibid. p. 363.

niator, and convicting him of ignorance, venality, malevolence, and an utter destitution of principle. When he played the verbiloquist, and pedant, Milton stripped him of his plumes, and held him forth naked to the laughter of the learned world. On no single point would he permit him to escape; he followed him through his work sentence by sentence; and exploded for ever the slavish doctrine of the divine right of kings.

The "Defence of the People" like the "Defence of the King," was written in Latin, and no translation, as Mr. Fletcher justly remarks, can adequately reflect the immortal original. The delicious mannerism of Milton evaporates in transfusion. Walsingham has hit the sense, but to hit off the style is, we fear, impossible. In extracting the perfume, the lustre of the flower, often more charming than its precious fragrance, is gone. After all, in the best translation, there must be the *real* difference between similarity and identity, and the *formal*, between the same warrior in a Roman panoply and a Saxon gear. Milton is yet unexcelled in English, and few will question his pre-eminence in Latin composition. The language of Cicero is upon his tongue, and, "winged with red lightning and impetuous rage," never did the great Roman orator wield its thunders more easily or more effectively.

We should be glad to extract very largely from this noble work, but our limits forbid it; the following passages may afford a faint and imperfect idea of its character.

Salmasius having said, that in undertaking the king's defence he found himself to be encompassed and affrighted with so many monsters of novelty that he was at a loss what to say first, what next, and what last of all, Milton replies, "I will tell you what the matter is with you. In the first place you find yourself affrighted and astonished at your own monstrous lies, and then you find that empty head

of your's not encompassed, but carried round, with so many trifles and fooleries, that you not only now do not, but never did, know what was fit to be spoken, and in what method. ' Among the many difficulties that you find in expressing the henousness of so incredible a piece of impiety, this one offers itself, you say, which is easily said; and must often be repeated; to wit, that the sun itself never beheld a more outrageous action' [than the putting to death of the king]. But by your good leave, sir, the sun has beheld many things, that blind Bernard never saw. But we are content that you should mention the sun over and over. And it will be a piece of prudence in you so to do. For though our wickedness does not require it, the coldness of the defence that you are making does. ' The original of kings,' you say, ' is an ancient as that of the sun.' May the gods and goddesses, Damasippus, bless thee with an everlasting solstice; that thou mayest always be warm, thou that canst not stir a foot without the sun. Perhaps you would avoid the imputation of being called a doctor Umbraticus. But alas! you are in perfect darkness, that make no difference between a paternal power, and a regal, and that when you had called kings fathers of their country, could fancy that with that metaphor you had persuaded us, that whatever is applicable to a father, is so to a king. Alas! there is a great difference betwixt them. Our fathers begot us. Our king made not us, but we him. Nature has given fathers to us all, but we ourselves appointed our own king. So that the people is not for the king, but the king for them. We bear with the father, though he be harsh and severe, and so we do with a king. But we do not bear with a father if he be a tyrant. If a father murder his son, he himself must die for it; and why should not a king be subject to the same law, which certainly is a most just one? Especially

considering that a father cannot by any possibility divest himself of that relation, but a king may easily make himself neither king nor father of his people. If this action of ours be considered according to its quality, at you call it, I who am both an Englishman born, and was an eye-witness of the transactions of these times, tell you, who are both a foreigner and an utter stranger to our affairs; that we have put to death neither a good, nor a just, nor a merciful, nor a devout, nor a godly, nor a peaceable king, as you style him; but an enemy, that has been so to us almost ten years to an end: nor one that was a father, but a destroyer of his country. That it is lawful to depose a tyrant, and to punish him according to his deserts; nay, that this is the opinion of very eminent divines, and of such as have been most instrumental in the late reformation, do you deny it if you dare. You confess that many kings have come to an unnatural death; some by the sword, some poisoned, some strangled, and some in a dungeon; but for a king to be arraigned in a court of judicature, to be put to plead for his life, to have sentence of death pronounced against him, and that sentence executed; this you think a more lamentable instance than all the rest, and make it a prodigious piece of impiety. Tell me, thou superlative fool, whether it be not more just, more agreeable to the rules of humanity, and the laws of all human societies, to bring a criminal, be his offence what it will, before a court of justice, to give him leave to speak for himself; and, if the law condemn him, then to put him to death as he has deserved, so as he may have time to repent or recollect himself; than presently, as soon as ever he is taken, to butcher him without more ado? Do you think there is a malefactor in the world, that if he might have his choice, would not choose to be thus dealt withal? And if this sort of proceeding against a private person be accounted the fairer of

the two, why should it not be accounted so against a prince? Nay, why should we not think, that himself liked it better? You would have had him killed privately, and none to have seen it, either that future ages might have lost the advantage of so good an example; or that they that did this glorious action, might seem to have avoided the light, and to have acted contrary to law and justice. You aggravate the matter by telling us, that it was not done in an uproar, or brought about by any faction amongst great men, or in the heat of a rebellion, either of the people, or the soldiers: but there was no hatred, no fear, no ambition, no blind precipitate rashness in the case; but that it was consulted on, and done with deliberation. You did well in leaving off being an advocate, and turn grammarian, who, from the accidents and circumstances of a thing, which in themselves considered sway neither one way nor other, argue in dispraise of it, before you have proved the thing itself to be either good or bad. See how open you lie: if the action you are discoursing of be commendable and praiseworthy, they that did it deserve the greater honour, in that they were prepossessed with no passions, but did what they did for virtue's sake. If there were great difficulty in the enterprise, they did well in not going about it rashly, but upon advice and consideration.”*

Salmasius had argued that kings derive their authority from God alone, and that, therefore, they were not answerable to the people for their government; whereupon Milton observes, “Bad kings, indeed, though to cast some terror into people's minds, and beget a reverence of themselves, they declare to the world, that God only is the author of kingly government; in their hearts and minds they reverence no other deity but that of fortune, according to that passage in Horace,

* Prose Works, pp. 344, 345.

All barb'rous people, and their princess too,
All purple tyrants honour you;
The very wand'ring Scythians do

Support the pillar of the Roman state,
Lest all men be involv'd in one man's fate.
Continue us in wealth and peace;
Let wars and tumults ever cease.

So that if it is by God that kings now-a-days reign, it is by God, too, that the people assert their own liberty; since all things are of him and by him. I am sure the Scripture bears witness to both; that by him kings reign, and that by him they are cast down from their thrones. And yet experience teaches us, that both these things are brought about by the people, oftener than by God. Be this right of kings, therefore, what it will, the right of the people is as much from God as it. And whenever any people, without some visible designation of God himself, appoint a king over them, they have the same right to put him down, that they had to set him up at first. And certainly it is a more God-like action to depose a tyrant than to set up one: and there appears much more of God in the people, when they depose an unjust prince, than in a king that oppresses an innocent people. Nay, the people have a warrant from God to judge wicked princes; for God has conferred this very honour upon those that are dear to him, that celebrating the praises of Christ their own king, 'they shall bind in chains the kings of the nations, (under which appellation all tyrants under the gospel are included,) and execute the judgments written upon them that challenge to themselves an exemption from all written laws,' Psalm cxlix. So that there is but little reason left for that wicked and foolish opinion, that kings, who commonly are the worst of men, should be so high in God's account, as that he should have put the world under them, to be at their beck, and be governed according to their humours; and that for their sakes alone he should

have reduced all mankind, whom he made after his own image, into the same condition with brutes.”*

He again handles this question in the following argument:—

“ ‘The law of nature’ say you, ‘in ordering who should govern others, respected the universal good of all mankind.’ It did not then regard the private good of any particular person, not of a prince; so that the king is for the people, and consequently the people superior to him: which being allowed, it is impossible that princes should have any right to oppress or enslave the people; that the inferior should have right to tyrannize over the superior. So that since kings cannot pretend to any right to do mischief, the right of the people must be acknowledged, according to the law of nature, to be superior to that of princes; and, therefore, by the same right, that before kingship was known, men united their strength and counsels for their mutual safety and defence; by the same right, that for the preservation of all men’s liberty, peace, and safety, they appointed one or more to govern the rest; by the same right they may depose those very persons whom for their valour or wisdom they advanced to the government, or any others that rule disorderly, if they find them, by reason of their slothfulness, folly, or impiety, unfit for government: since nature does not regard the good of one, but of all in general.”†

The impudent effrontery with which Salmasius, who had previously stood forth as the champion of liberty, now put forward the most slavish doctrines, excited the choler and roused the indignation of Milton, almost beyond conception; and he sometimes becomes fiercely vituperative, as in the following passage, which occurs in his reply to what his adversary had said about the people—that whatever

* Prose Works, pp. 353, 354.

† Ibid, p. 375.

their original right might have been, they had stripped, and for ever divested themselves of that right, when once they had chosen a king.—

“Thou jail-bird of a knight, thou clay-spirit, thou everlasting scandal to thy native country! The most despicable slaves in the world ought to abhor and spit upon such a factor for slavery, such a public pander as thou art. Certainly if people had so enslaved themselves to kings, then might kings turn them over to other masters, or sell them for money, and yet we know that kings cannot so much as alienate the demesnes of the crown: and shall he, that has but the crown, and the revenues that belong to it, as an usufructuary, and those given him by the people, can he be said to have, as it were, purchased the people, and made them his property? Though you were bored through both ears, and went barefoot, you would not be so vile and despicable, so much more contemptible than all slaves, as the broaching such a scandalous doctrine as this makes you. But go on, and punish yourself for your rogueries as now you do, though against your will. You frame a long discourse of the law of war; which is nothing to the purpose in this place: for neither did Charles conquer us, and for his ancestors, if it were never so much granted that they did, yet have they often renounced their title as conquerors. And certain it is, that we were never so conquered, but that as we swore allegiance to them, so they swore to maintain our laws, and govern by them: which laws, when Charles had notoriously violated, taken in what capacity you will, as one who had formerly been a conqueror, or was now a perjured king, we subdued him by force, he himself having begun with us first. And according to your own opinion. ‘Whatever is acquired by war, becomes his property that acquired it.’ So that how full soever you are of words, how impertinent soever a babbler, what-

ever you prate, how great a noise soever you make, what quotations soever out of the rabbins, though you make yourself never so hoarse, to the end of this chapter, assure yourself, that nothing of it makes for the king, he being now conquered, but all for us, who by God's assistance are conquerors."*

It cannot be denied that this passage abounds with very coarse and violent personalities: but then it must be remembered, that in addition to the insults Salmasius offered to the republic, he was guilty of indulging in the most virulent abuse of Milton himself. He speaks of Englishmen as those who "toss the heads of kings as so many tennis balls; who play with crowns as if they were bowls; who look upon sceptres as so many crooks." He reproaches Milton as being but "a puny piece of man; an homunculus, a dwarf, deprived of the human figure; a bloodless being, composed of nothing but skin and bone; a contemptible pedagogue, fit only to flog boys." Subsequently, finding that Milton's person was handsome, he accuses him of being guilty of unnatural crimes. He glories that he lost his health and his eyes in answering the "Defence of the King," but malignantly sympathises with him, that he is not in possession of that beauty which rendered him so great a favourite in Italy. His malignity is almost incredible; he stands at nothing to blacken the austere virtue of his antagonist, and to induce a belief that he was guilty of a crime too infamous to name.

But, to return to the Defence.—

Milton well understood that the *spirit* of the constitution was of far more value than its mere *letter*; and that whenever circumstances placed the two in opposition to each other, the latter should be made to give way. There is something in what follows peculiarly applicable to our own times.

* Prose Works, p. 387.

"Then you take upon you to intermeddle with the constitution of our government, in which you are no way concerned, who are both a stranger and a foreigner; but it shews your sauciness, and want of good manners. Come then, let us hear your solecisms, like a busy coxcomb as you are. You tell us, but it is in false Latin, that what those desperadoes say, is only to deceive the people! You rascal! Was it not for this that you, a renegade grammarian, were so forward to intermeddle with the affairs of our government that you might introduce your solecisms and barbarisms amongst us? But say, how have we deceived the people? 'The form of government which they have set up, is not popular, but military.' This is what that herd of fugitives and vagabonds hired you to write. So that I shall not trouble myself to answer you, who bleat what you know nothing of, but I will answer them that hired you.* 'Who excluded the lords from parliament, was it the people?' Ay, it was the people; and in so doing they threw an intolerable yoke of slavery from off their necks. Those very soldiery who you say did it, were not foreigners, but our own countrymen, and a great part of the people; and they did it with the consent, and at the desire, of almost all the rest of the people, and not without the authority of the parliament neither. 'Was it the people that cut off part of the house of commons, forcing some away,' &c. Yes, I say, it was the people. For whatever the better and sounder part of the senate did, in which the true power of the people resided, why may not the people be said to have done it? What if the greater part of the senate should choose to be slaves, or to expose the government to sale, ought not the lesser number to interpose, and endeavour to retain their liberty, if it be in their power? 'But the officers of the army and

* Salmasius received one hundred Jacobuses for his labours.

their soldiers did it.' And we are beholden to those officers for not being wanting to the state, but repelling the tumultuary violence of the citizens and mechanics of London, who, like that rabble that appeared for Clodius, had but a little before beset the very parliament house? Do you therefore call the right of the parliament, to whom it properly and originally belongs, to take care of the liberty of the people both in peace and war, a military power? But it is no wonder that those traitors that have dictated these passages to you, should talk at that rate; so that profligate faction of Antony and his adherents used to call the senate of Rome, when they armed themselves against the enemies of their country, *The camp of Pompey.*"*

Milton has been charged with indecency and want of feeling, in attacking the character of Charles, after his execution; nothing can be more unmerited. Milton possessed a nobleness of soul which was incompatible with such an act. He never spoke of the deceased king, but when the *pseudo* friends of Charles forced it upon him to do so, in vindication of the leaders of the revolution, or in defence of the people's rights. Witness the following, among many other passages, in proof of this delicacy and generosity of feeling. It opens the twelfth chapter of the "Defence of the People of England."

"I wish, Salmasius, that you had left out this part of your discourse concerning the king's crime, which it had been more advisable for yourself and your party to have done; for I am afraid lest in giving you an answer to it, I should appear too sharp and severe upon him, now he is dead, and hath received his punishment. But since you choose rather to discourse confidently and at large upon the subject, I will make you sensible, that you could not have done a more inconsiderate

* Prose Works, p. 386.

thing, than to reserve the worst part of your cause to the last, to wit, that of ripping up and inquiring into the king's crimes; which, when I shall prove them to have been true and most exorbitant, they will render his memory unpleasant and odious to all good men, and imprint now in the close of the controversy a just hatred of you, who undertake his defence, on the readers' minds."*

We must lay one more passage before the reader, and that shall be the eloquent, powerful, and touching appeal to the people of England, with which the Defence concludes: it is the overflowing of a generous and a devout heart.

"One thing yet remains to be done, which perhaps is of the greatest concern of all, and that is, that you, my countrymen, refute this adversary of yours yourselves, which I do not see any other means of your effecting, than by a constant endeavour to outdo all men's bad words by your own good deeds. When you laboured under more sorts of oppression than one, you betook yourselves to God for refuge, and he was graciously pleased to hear your most earnest prayer and desires. He has gloriously delivered you, the first of nations, from the two greatest mischiefs of this life, and most pernicious to virtue, tyranny, and superstition; he has endued you with greatness of mind to be the first of mankind, who after having conquered their own king, and having had him delivered into their hands have not scrupled to condemn him judicially, and pursuant to that sentence of condemnation, to put him to death. After the performing so glorious an action as this, you ought to do nothing that is mean and little, not so much as to think of, much less to do, any thing but what is great and sublime, which to attain to this is your only way; as you have subdued your enemies in the field, so to make appear, that unarmed, and in the highest

* Prose Works, p. 406.

outward peace and tranquillity, you of all mankind are best able to subdue ambition, avarice, the love of riches, and can best avoid the corruptions that prosperity is apt to introduce (which generally subdue and triumph over other nations) to shew as great justice, temperance, and moderation in the maintaining your liberty, as you have shewn courage in freeing yourselves from slavery. These are the only arguments by which you will be able to evince that you are not such persons as this fellow represents you, Traitors, Robbers, Murderers, Parricides, Madmen: that you did not put your king to death out of any ambitious design, or a desire of invading the rights of others, nor out of any seditious principles or sinister ends; that it was not an act of fury or madness; but that it was wholly out of love to your liberty, your religion, to justice, virtue, and your country, that you punished a tyrant. But if it should fall out otherwise, (which God forbid!) if as you have been valiant in war, you should grow debauched in peace, you that have had such visible demonstrations of the goodness of God to yourselves, and his wrath against your enemies; and that you should not have learned by so eminent, so remarkable an example before your eyes, to fear God, and work righteousness; for my part, I shall easily grant and confess (for I cannot deny it) whatever ill men may speak or think of you, to be very true. And you will find in a little time, that God's displeasure against you will be greater than it has been against your adversaries, greater than his grace and favour has been to yourselves, which you have had larger experience of than any other nation under heaven.”

Previously to the publication of this work, Milton's fame was not very great abroad, although he enjoyed the friendship of some of the greatest

men among the literati of Europe; but no sooner was the "Defence" sent forth, than all nations were found viewing with each other to render him the highest tributes of their respect and admiration. It is true, some of the crowned heads stood aghast at the boldness with which the divine right of kings had been treated by him, and exhibited their displeasure by ordering the Defence to be burnt.

Toland, and others after him have stated that Milton received £1000 from the Treasury, as a reward for this great work. No one can deny that he had entitled himself to such a reward by the service he had rendered to the state, but there is good reason to believe that Toland had been mis-informed; for in the Second Defence, published three years afterwards, Milton declares that he had "not been made one penny the richer" by the publications he had undertaken for the service of his country; besides which there is the following entry in the Council Book:—"1651.—June 18th. Ordered, that thanks be given to Mr. Milton on behalf of the Commonwealth, for his good services done in writing an answer to the book of Salmasius, written against the proceedings of the Commonwealth of England." But, says Mr. Todd, "all this is crossed over, and nearly three lines following obliterated, in which the accurate Mr. Lemon says, a grant of money was made to Milton." Admitting this to be the fact, is it not reasonable to conclude that Milton refused to accept the grant, because after the cancelled passage, the regular entry thus follows: "The Council, taking notice of the manie good services performed by Mr. John Milton, the secretarie for forreigne Languages, to this State and Commonwealth, particularlie for his booke in vindication of the Parliament and people of England, against the calumnies and invectives of Salmasius, have thought fite to declare their resentment and good acceptance of the same; and that the thanks

of the Council be returned to Mr. Milton, and their sense expressed in that behalf." This certainly seems to indicate that Milton had not then received a more substantial reward at the hands of the Council.

His salary, as foreign secretary, was £288 18s. 6d. a year, and in 1652, when he had lost his eyesight, he was allowed an assistant, without any reduction being made. In 1655, an order was made, to reduce his salary to £150 per annum; but it was, without doubt, subsequently augmented, for in October 25th, 1659, there is a warrant for the payment of the Council of State's contingencies, in which is included the salaries of John Milton, and Andrew Marvell, who had been associated with him in 1657, at £200 per annum each.*

But Milton experienced a reward of much higher value in his estimation than any pecuniary remuneration. While his opponent's production lingered on the venders' shelves, or crept languidly through a very confined circulation, his own passed rapidly through several impressions—was translated into foreign languages, and occupied a large space in the public mind.† Salmasius had reason to repent bit-

* Mr. Horace Smith, in his admired novel of "Brambletye House," thus alludes to Milton and Marvell, as Latin Secretaries to the Protector—"At the upper end, before a desk, on which were several folio volumes, two gentlemen were seated, one of whom was writing from the dictation of his companion. The latter, who was rather below the middle size, wearing his light brown hair parted at the foretop, and hanging down on either side of his singularly comely and majestic countenance, took not the smallest notice of them as they passed, but continued dictating. His amanuensis, a strong set figure, with a round face, cherry cheeks, hazel eyes, and brown hair, bowed to them with a cheerful smile, as they walked through into an inner apartment, but did not speak. These were the immortal John Milton, Latin secretary to the Protector, and the scarcely less illustrious Andrew Marvell, recently appointed his assistant; men worthy to sit enthroned in that costly library, and to be surrounded by the great and kindred intellect of the world; men who have become the certain heirs of never-dying fame, while with one or two exceptions, the crowd of nobles and grandees that thronged the adjoining saloon, passed rapidly away into irredeemable oblivion."

† The author of "Clamor Regii Sanguinis ad Coelum," which called forth Milton's Second Defence, says, "Of what the most execrable Milton

terly of having lent himself to the royalists. His work was suppressed in Holland, by an order of the States General, the friendship of the learned was withdrawn, and even Queen Christina of Sweden, with whom he was a favourite, and in whose court he resided when Milton's reply reached Stockholm, "cashed him her favour as a pernicious parasite and a promoter of tyranny." He died at Spa, in Germany, in September, 1652, as is said, of chagrin and mortification, just after he had finished a most virulent reply to his antagonist.

In 1652, Milton removed, for the benefit of his health, from his lodgings at Whitehall to a house opening into St. James' Park, where he remained till the Restoration. Shortly after this removal, he lost his wife, in childbed, and was left with three orphan daughters; and, what was a still greater calamity, his own eye-sight was totally destroyed. He was not idle, however, for in addition to the discharge of his duties as secretary to the council, he continued his labours in defence of the commonwealth.

Numerous replies to the "Defence of the People of England," were sent forth by the royalists and those in their pay, but Milton left them to perish in their obscurity. In 1652, however, came forth the work just referred to, entitled *Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Culum aduersus Parricidas Anglicanes*; "The Cry of the King's Blood for Vengeance to Heaven against the English Parricides;" and the calumnies which it heaped upon both the Parliament and Milton himself, entitled it to the distinction of a reply. "The ignoble libeller, a real compound of the monkey and tiger, was a Frenchman of the name of De Moulin. His ribald

have especially elaborated to ruin the reputation of the deceased king, and to destroy the hereditary succession of the crown, there are so many of them, that I am uncertain to which of these I should refer my reader."

work was written in Latin, and printed at the Hague. This piece of service was ultimately rewarded with a prebendal stall at Canterbury. Such was the scandalous and scurrilous tendency of this work that its author was afraid to publish it in this country. For this purpose, therefore, he sent it to Salmasius, and this omnivorous pedagogue having gorged its nauseous flattery of himself (the author even wrote him a grand thanksgiving ode, entitled, ' *Magno Salmasio pro Defensione Regia Ode Eucharistica*') placed the MS. in the hands of his protégé, one Morus or More, a migratory Scotchman, then settled in France, and a celebrated protestant preacher of the day, to conduct through the press. More entered heartily into the honourable task, wrote the dedication to the exiled Charles, under the name of Adrian Ulac (Latinè *Vlaccus*) the printer, and became so mixed up with the work, as to be generally considered as its author. He was the victim of the conspiracy against our countryman—and for a very brief reputation (of which he certainly made the most while it lasted) his life was embittered, and his memory covered with infamy. A considerable period elapsed between the aggression and the castigation. In 1654, Milton produced, in reply, his famous second defence—' *Defensio Secunda pro Populo Anglicano, contra infamem Libellum Anonymum, cui litulus, Regii Clamor, &c.*' *

The barbarous mode of attack which his adversary had chosen in this work, compelled Milton to lay before the world a sketch of many parts of his own history, as well as to pursue Morus through the opprobrious privacies of his immoralities and scandalous vices. The work becomes on the former account peculiarly interesting, and has been amply used by all the biographers of the great

* Fletcher, Introductory Review, p. xxxvii.

patriot and bard.—It is difficult to determine what to extract where all is fine; and we shall therefore take a few passages almost at random.

Who can do other than admire the “lofty and swelling tone” which he assumes in his exordium, after recounting the valorous and virtuous deeds of his countrymen, in taking up arms to defend the sanctity of the laws, and the rights of conscience, “during which mighty struggle, no anarchy, no licentiousness was seen; no illusions of glory, no extravagant emulation of the ancients inflaming them with a thirst for ideal liberty; the rectitude of their lives, and the sobriety of their habits, teaching them the only true and safe road to real liberty;”—in proudly adverting to the share he himself took in the hazardous but glorious cause of freedom?—

“I am far,” he says, “from wishing to make any vain or arrogant comparisons, or to speak ostentatiously of myself, but, in a cause so great and glorious, and particularly on an occasion when I am called by the general suffrage to defend the very defenders of that cause; I can hardly refrain from assuming a more lofty and swelling tone, than the simplicity of an exordium may seem to justify: and much as I may be surpassed in the powers of eloquence, and copiousness of diction, by the illustrious orators of antiquity; yet the subject of which I treat, was never surpassed in any age, in dignity or in interest. It has excited such general and such ardent expectation, that I imagine myself not in the forum or on the rostra, surrounded only by the people of Athens or of Rome; but about to address in this, as I did in my former Defence, the whole collective body of people, cities, states, and councils of the wise and eminent, through the wide expanse of anxious and listening Europe. I seem to survey as from a towering height, the far-extended tracts of sea and land, and innumerable crowds of spec-

tators, betraying in their looks the liveliest interest, and sensations the most congenial with my own. Here I behold the proud and manly prowess of the Germans, disdaining servitude; there the generous and lively impetuosity of the French; on this side the calm and stately valour of the Spaniard; on that, the composed and wary magnanimity of the Italian. Of all the lovers of liberty and virtue, the magnanimous and the wise, in whatever quarter they may be found, some secretly favour, others openly approve; some greet me with congratulations and applause: others, who had long been proof against conviction, at last yield themselves captive to the force of truth. Surrounded by congregated multitudes, I now imagine, that, from the columns of Hercules to the Indian ocean, I behold the nations of the earth recovering that liberty which they so long had lost; and that the people of this island are transporting to other countries a plant of more beneficial qualities, and more noble growth, than that which Triptolemus is reported to have carried from region to region; that they are disseminating the blessings of civilization and freedom among cities, kingdoms, and nations. Nor shall I approach unknown, nor perhaps unloved, if it be told that I am the same person who engaged in single combat that fierce advocate of despotism; till then reputed invincible in the opinion of many, and in his own conceit; who insolently challenged us and our armies to the combat; but whom, while I repelled his virulence, I silenced with his own weapons; and over whom, if I may trust to the opinions of impartial judges, I gained a complete and glorious victory.”*

His virulent adversary had made Milton’s calamities the butt of his malice: he had reproached him as

A monster huge and hideous, void of sight;

* Prose Works, p. 820.

and Milton, in replying to his rancorous abuse, became, like Paul, under similar provocation, "A fool in glorying." He first speaks of his personal appearance, generally, and then adverts to the charge of blindness, in the following touching strain.

"I wish that I could with equal facility refute what this barbarous opponent has said of my blindness; but I cannot do it; and I must submit to the affliction. It is not so wretched to be blind, as it is not to be capable of enduring blindness. But why should I not endure a misfortune, which it behoves every one to be prepared to endure, if it should happen; which may, in the common course of things, happen to any man; and which has been known to happen to the most distinguished and virtuous persons in history? Shall I mention those wise and ancient bards, whose misfortunes the gods are said to have compensated by superior endowments, and whom men so much revered, that they chose rather to impute their want of sight to the injustice of heaven than to their own want of innocence or virtue? What is reported of the anger Tiregias is well known; of whom Apollonius sung thus in his Argonauts;

To men be dared the will divine disclose,
Nor fear'd what Jove might in his wrath impose.
The gods assigned him age without decay,
But snatch'd the blessing of his sight away.

"But God himself is truth; in propagating which, as men display a greater integrity and zeal, they approach nearer to the similitude of God, and possess a greater portion of his love. We cannot suppose the Deity envious of truth, or unwilling that it should be freely communicated to mankind. The loss of sight, therefore, which this inspired sage, who was so eager in promoting knowledge among men, sustained, cannot be considered as a judicial punishment. Or shall I mention those worthies who were as distinguished for wisdom in the cabinet,

as for valour in the field? And with respect to myself, though I have accurately examined my conduct, and scrutinized my soul, I call thee, O - God, the searcher of hearts, to witness, that I am not conscious, either in the more early or in the later periods of my life, of having committed any enormity, which might deservedly have marked me out as a fit object for such a calamitous visitation. But since my enemies boast that this affliction is only a retribution for the transgressions of my pen, I again invoke the Almighty to witness, that I never, at any time, wrote any thing which I did not think agreeable to truth, to justice, and to piety. This was my persuasion then, and I feel the same persuasion now. Nor was I ever prompted to such exertions by the influence of ambition, by the lust of lucre or of praise, it was only by the conviction of duty and the feeling of patriotism, a disinterested passion for the extension of civil and religious liberty."

After having spoken of the danger he incurred of losing his sight, in the opinion of his physicians, when about to undertake the Defence of the People of England, and his own unshaken resolution to achieve the work, at whatever hazard it might be, he thus proceeds—

" Thus it is clear by what motives I was governed in the measures which I took, and the losses which I sustained. Let then the calumniators of the divine goodness cease to revile, or to make me the object of their superstitious imaginations. Let them consider, that my situation, such as it is, is neither an object of my shame nor my regret, that my resolutions are too firm to be shaken, that I am not depressed by any sense of the divine displeasure; that, on the other hand, in the most momentous periods, I have had full experience of the divine favour and protection; and that, in the solace and the strength which have been infused

into me from above, I have been enabled to do the will of God; that I may oftener think on what he has bestowed, than on what he has withheld; that, in short, I am unwilling to exchange my consciousness of rectitude with that of any other person; and that I feel the recollection and treasured store of tranquillity and delight. But if the choice were necessary, I would, sir, prefer my blindness to yours; yours is a cloud spread over the mind, which darkens both the light of reason and of conscience; mine keeps from my view only the coloured surfaces of things, while it leaves me at liberty to contemplate the beauty and stability of virtue and of truth. How many things are there besides, which I would not willingly see; how many which I must see against my will; and how few which I feel any anxiety to see! There is, as the apostle has remarked, a way to strength through weakness. Let me then be the most feeble creature alive, as long as that feebleness serves to invigorate the energies of my rational and immortal spirit! as long as in that obscurity in which I am enveloped, the light of the divine presence more clearly shines; then, in the proportion as I am weak, I shall be invincibly strong; and in proportion as I am blind, I shall more clearly see. O! that I may thus be perfected by feebleness, and irradiated by obscurity!"*

What a delightful picture of a heart overflowing with piety and patriotism is this! The same cheerful acquiescence in the divine will is discoverable in his more private thoughts and communications. Thus, in a letter addressed to his dear friend, Leonard Philaris, of Athens, who had expressed much anxious solicitude about Milton's calamity, and indulged a hope that surgical skill might even yet restore him to sight, he says, "Though your physician may kindle a small ray of hope, yet I make

* Prose Works, pp. 927, 928.

up my mind to the malady as quite incurable ; and I often reflect, that as the wise man admonishes, days of darkness are destined to each of us, the darkness which I experience, less oppressive than that of the tomb, is, owing to the singular goodness of the Deity, passed amid the pursuits of literature and the cheering salutations of friendship. But if, as is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God, why may not any one acquiesce in the privation of his sight, when God has so amply furnished his mind and his conscience with eyes ? While he so tenderly provides for me, while he so graciously leads me by the hand and conducts me on the way, I will, since it is his pleasure, rather rejoice than repine at being blind. And, my dear Philaris, whatever may be the event, I wish you adieu with no less courage and composure than if I had the eyes of a lynx.”^o

Milton’s castigation of his adversary was frightfully severe—though not unmeritedly so. In one place he says,

“ You must therefore be insidiously studious to oppress me with the public indignation ; and thus you corrupt and pervert the open and manly vigour of an enemy, by the treacherous and inveterate indignity of your disposition ; and you shew yourself, not only the worst of men, but the basest of enemies. But, good sir, I will by no means frustrate your endeavours : for, though I may wish to rival Ulysses in the merits of his patriotism, I am yet no competitor for the arms of Achilles. I am not solicitous for an Elissum painted on a shield, which others may see me brandish in the contest ; but I desire to bear upon my shoulders a real, not a painted, weight, of which I may feel the pressure, but which may be imperceptible to others. For

^o Prose Works, p. 268.

since I cherish no private rancour nor hostility against any man, nor any man that I know of against me, I am well contented, for the sake of the public interest, to be so much aspersed and so much reviled. Nor, while I sustain the greatest weight of the disgrace, do I complain because I have the smallest share of the profit or the praise; for I am content to do what is virtuous, for the sake of the action itself, without any sinister expectations. Let others look to that; but do you, sir, know, that my hands were never soiled with the guilt of peculation; and that I never was even a shilling the richer by those exertions, which you most vehemently traduce. Here More again begins, and in his second epistle assigns the reasons for his writing; to whom? Why, truly, More, the perpetrator of adultery and rape, addresses 'the lover of Christianity'!"

Morus had, indeed, by the notorious profligacy of his life, laid himself open to these retorts, while his calumnious attacks and brutal tauntings of Milton, provoked them. Further on, Milton observes,

"What you have produced of your own, you will find it difficult to defend; which, while it indicates a mind utterly void of all religious principles, every good man will shudder while he reads. 'The love of God, and a lively sense of the insult that has been offered to his holy name, compels me to lift up my suppliant hands to heaven.' Hide, O hide those hands, so foully stained with lust and rapine; nor, with hands such as those, attempt to touch the throne of God, with which you have so often polluted the rites of religion, and the altars of his worship. The divine vengeance which you so lavishly imprecate on others, you will find at last that you have been imprecating upon yourself. Hitherto we have had only the prelude to the cry, but (now it is going to occupy the principal and

almost sole part in the drama) it swells th cheek and strains the jaws in the act of mounting to heaven ; whither, if it ascend, it will resound more effectually against the brawling More. ‘ Since the majesty of kings has, in all ages, been held sacred,’ &c. You attack me, sir, with much common-place abuse, and many malicious observations which are quite irrelavent to the purpose, for the murder of a king, and the punishment of a tyrant, are not the same thing ; but do differ, and will for ever differ, as long as sense and reason, justice and equity, the knowledge of right and wrong, shall prevail among men. But enough, and more than enough, has been said on this subject ; nor shall I suffer you, who have in vain assaulted me with so many senseless imprecations, at last to bring about my end with a plethora of disgust. You then say some fine things on patience and on virtue. But,

You talk on virtue, while on vice you pore,
And preach most chaste discourses while you whore.”*

Milton has been blamed for his severity towards his antagonist, notwithstanding the provocation he received ; but, as Mr. Fletcher justly and eloquently remarks, “ there is a terrible moral in all this exposure of sacerdotal depravity in More : and, doubtless, many a heart has beaten, and many a face has blushed, under the influence of various emotions, while that indignant page has been read, in which Milton has tracked this clerical debauchee through the paths and into the haunts of his depravity ; and then thrown the glare of retributive daylight into their recesses. The justifiable personalities of this, and of the next works, have all the coherence of personification about them. More becomes a formal dramatic character—the type and representative of a species always numerous in religio-political establishments. The Morus of 1654 is the exact portraiture

* Prose Works, p. 929.

of one half of those who have been, and in this nineteenth century are, candidates for office in a church which shall be nameless,—a corporeal spirituality under which the land and religion yet groan;—and the mitred successors of the holy apostles who are so busily occupied within its hal-lowed inclosure, not being invested with the power of discerning spirits, can never prevent such men from obtaining their holy orders for admission into that spiritual and temporal vineyard. While the eye of the bishop cannot detect hypocrisy, the palm of his hand possesses the touch of indelibility, and the wand of discipline is broken against the silver crozier."

Milton's *Eulogia on the Founders of the Commonwealth* are among some of the most beautiful passages of his writings. Fleetwood, Lambert, Howley, Merton, Whitlocke, Pickering, Strickland, Sydenham, Sydney, Montacute, Laurence, and, though last not least, Fairfax, Cromwell, and Bradshaw— are all celebrated, as having signalized themselves by their courage, magnanimity, and virtue.

In order to appreciate the fidelity with which Milton has pourtrayed the character of Cromwell, and to estimate the wisdom of that advice which he tenders to him, it becomes necessary to glance at the actual state of public affairs at this time.

The parliament, though it had done some noble acts, had omitted to do many others, which were expected of it, and had also done many obnoxious ones, and had thus failed to conciliate the country, had been dissolved by Cromwell, who was now possessed of the supreme power, with the title of Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England. A provision was made for the convening of a triennial parliament, in the constitution of which some regard was had to the people's rights. The country was torn to pieces by contending factions, and the only hope of a restoration to internal tran-

quillity and peace, was to be found in the inflexible honesty and indomitable firmness of the Protector, whose wisdom and valour had more than once already saved the commonwealth from destruction. Milton's knowledge of human nature, was as profound as his patriotism was ardent, and he could not but be alive to the danger with which the republic was threatened, by the union of all the high powers in the state in the person of the Protector. It was a crisis, however, in public affairs, and he seized upon the occasion which the publication of this work threw into his way, of paying a just tribute to the enlightened wisdom, the martial prowess, and the stern integrity by which the conduct of Cromwell had been hitherto characterised, and of enforcing upon him a consideration of those high principles and an adoption of those political measures by which alone the nation could be placed upon a foundation of enduring prosperity. Milton was no parasite; he scorned to offer the incense of adulation to the great and powerful; and extravagant as some of his praises of Cromwell may be thought, it cannot be denied that even in these, he discovers "the quality of an erect and independent spirit."

The passage we are about to quote is preceded by a rapid but vivid sketch of those great events which had distinguished the two or three preceding years: the recovery of Ireland by one decisive blow; the subjugation of Scotland, which had been vainly attempted by the English monarchs during a period of eight hundred years; the great and crowning victory at Worcester; the dismissal of the long parliament; the meeting and the subsequent abdication of the succeeding legislature. The deserted commonwealth is then represented as leaning for support upon Cromwell alone; who, by that best of rights, acknowledged by reason and derived from God, in the right of superior talents and virtue, is

in possession of the supreme power. The relative merits of the several titles of honour are afterwards discussed, and the magnanimity of Cromwell, evinced by his rejection of the name of king, is the topic of praise with which the extract commences.

“ Do you then, sir, continue your course with the same unrivalled magnanimity ; it sits well upon you ; to you our country owes its liberties, nor can you sustain a character at once more momentous and more august than that of the author, the guardian, and the preserver of our liberties : and hence you have not only eclipsed the achievements of all our kings, but even those which have been fabled of our heroes. Often reflect what a dear pledge the land of your nativity has entrusted to your care ; and that liberty which she once expected only from the chosen flower of her talents and her virtues, she now expects from you only, and by you only hopes to obtain. Revere the fond expectations which we cherish, the solicitudes of your anxious country ; revere the looks and the wounds of your brave companions in arms, who, under your banners, have so strenuously fought for liberty ; revere the shades of those who perished in the contest ; revere also the opinions and the hopes which foreign states entertain concerning us, who promise to themselves so many advantages from that liberty which we have so bravely acquired, from the establishment of that new government which has begun to shed its splendour on the world, which, if it be suffered to vanish like a dream, would involve us in the deepest abyss of shame ; and lastly, revere yourself ; and, after having endured so many sufferings and encountered so many perils for the sake of liberty, do not suffer it, now it is obtained, either to be violated by yourself, or in any one instance impaired by others. You cannot be truly free unless we are free too ;

for such is the nature of things, that he who entrenches on the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own and become a slave. But, if you, who have hitherto been the patron and tutelary genius of liberty, if you, who are exceeded by no one in justice, in piety, and in goodness, should hereafter invade that liberty which you have defended, your conduct must be fatally operative, not only against the cause of liberty, but the general interests of piety and virtue. Your integrity and virtue will appear to have evaporated, your faith in religion to have been small; your character with posterity will dwindle into insignificance, by which a most destructive blow will be levelled against the happiness of mankind. The work which you have undertaken is of incalculable moment, which will thoroughly sift and expose every principle and sensation of your heart, which will fully display the vigour and genius of your character, which will evince whether you really possess those great qualities of piety, fidelity, justice, and self-denial, which made us believe that you were elevated by the special direction of the Deity to the highest pinnacle of power. At once wisely and discreetly to hold the sceptre over three powerful nations, to persuade people to relinquish inveterate and corrupt for new and more beneficial maxims and institutions, to penetrate into the remotest parts of the country, to have the mind present and operative in every quarter, to watch against surprise, to provide against danger, to reject the blandishments of pleasure and the pomp of power; these are exertions compared with which the labour of war is mere pastime; which will require every energy and employ every faculty that you possess, which demand a man supported from above, and almost instructed by immediate inspiration. These and more than these are, no doubt, the objects which occupy your attention and engross your soul; as

well as the means by which you may accomplish these important ends, and render our liberty at once more ample and more secure. And this you can, in my opinion, in no other way so readily effect, as by associating, in your councils, as you have done, the companions of your dangers and your toils; men of exemplary modesty, integrity, and courage; whose hearts have not been hardened in cruelty and rendered insensible to pity by the sight of so much ravage and so much death, but whom it has rather inspired with the love of justice, with a respect for religion, and with the feeling of compassion; and who are more zealously interested in the preservation of liberty, in proportion as they have encountered more perils in its defence. They are not strangers or foreigners, a hireling rout scraped together from the dregs of the people, but for the most part, men of the better conditions in life, of families not disgraced if not ennobled, of fortunes either ample or moderate; and what if some among them are recommended by their poverty? for it was not the lust of ravage which brought them into the field; it was the calamitous aspect of the times, which, in the most critical circumstances, and often amid the most disastrous turns of fortune, roused them to attempt the deliverance of their country from the fangs of despotism. They were men prepared, not only to debate, but to fight; not only to argue in the senate, but to engage the enemy in the field. But unless we will continually cherish indefinite and illusory expectations, I see not in whom we can place any confidence, if not in these men, and such as these. We have the surest and most indubitable pledge of their fidelity in this, that they have already exposed themselves to death in the service of their country; of their piety in this, that they have been always wont to ascribe the whole glory of their successes to the favour of the Deity,

whose help they have so sufficiently implored, and so conspicuously obtained; of their justice in this, that they even brought the king to trial, and when his guilt was proved, refused to save his life; of their moderation in our own uniform experience of its effects, and because, if by any outrage, they should disturb the peace they have procured, they themselves will be the first to feel the miseries which it will occasion, the first to meet the havoc of the sword, and the first again to risk their lives for all those comforts and distinctions which they have so happily acquired; and lastly, of their fortitude in this, that there is no instance of any people who ever recovered their liberty with so much courage and success; and therefore let us not suppose, that there can be any persons who will be more zealous in preserving it. To these men, whose talents are so splendid, and whose worth has been so thoroughly tried, you would without doubt do right to trust the protection of our liberties; nor would it be easy to say to whom they might more safely be entrusted. Then, if you leave the church to its own government, and relieve yourself and the other public functionaries from a charge so onerous, and so incompatible with your functions; and will no longer suffer two powers, so different as the civil and the ecclesiastical, to commit fornication together, and by their mutual and delusive aids, in appearance to strengthen, but in reality to weaken and finally to subvert each other; if you shall remove all power of persecution out of the church (but persecution will never cease, so long as men are bribed to preach the gospel by a mercenary salary, which is forcibly extorted, rather than gratuitously bestowed, which serves only to poison religion and to strangle truth) you will then effectually have cast those money-changers out of the temple, who do not merely truckle with doves but with the dove itself,

with the Spirit of the Most High. If you do all this, you will always be dear to those, who think not merely that their own sect or faction, but that all citizens of all descriptions, should enjoy equal rights and equal laws."⁶

Thus does he stand before the supreme magistrate, like one of the inspired prophets of old, and, with a fearless intrepidity and a dreadless majesty, reminds him of his high obligations and weighty responsibilities, and of the fatal consequences which would result to himself and to his country, should pusillanimity or ambition induce him to swerve from the strait line of his duty. The passage, however, may not be fully understood, in all its bearings, without a few additional words on the position of Cromwell, and of the country, at the time it refers to.

Cromwell had placed himself at the head of the government by means of the army; declaring upon his acceptance of the office of Lord Protector, that he did it merely to exercise the duty of constable, and preserve peace in the nation. In his name was all justice to be administered; and from him were all magistrates, and all honours to be derived, whilst he had the power of pardoning all crimes, excepting murder and treason. A council of state was at the same time appointed, which was not to exceed twenty-one, nor to be less than thirteen persons; and these were to hold their office during life, or good behaviour. The executive power was then placed in the hands of the protector and his council. The protector was not at liberty to treat with foreign states without the advice of his council, nor to make peace or war without its consent. The disposal of all military and naval power was vested in him, jointly with the parliament. The appointment, too, of the principal officers of state, of the

⁶ Prose Works, pp. 945-947.

chancellor, treasurer, admiral, chief-governors of Ireland and Scotland, and chief-justices of the bench and common pleas, was to be subject to the approbation of parliament. Laws could not be made, nor taxes be imposed, except by consent of parliament; to which was added a clause, that if the protector's assent to bills passed by the parliament was not obtained within twenty days, they were to have the effect of laws by the authority of parliament alone. The protector had, in fact, no veto upon the laws, and therefore the legislative authority must be considered to have been vested exclusively in the parliament, which had it in its power to pass what laws it pleased. The protector was obliged to summon a parliament every three years; and he was not to adjourn, prorogue, or dismiss it, except by its own consent, until five months had elapsed after calling it together. All the small boroughs, most exposed to influence and corruption, were to be disfranchised, and the number of county members increased; while every man who possessed property, either in land or personality, to the value of £200, was to have a vote.

From this brief outline of the new constitution, it will be seen, that Cromwell did not seek to exalt himself in any way above what the real exigencies of the case required, and that Milton was therefore fully justified in praising his magnanimity and disinterestedness in what he had done.*

The Second Defence closes with an eloquent and powerful appeal to the people, to preserve the liberty they had achieved, by expelling sloth, debauchery, and luxury from amongst them, and by cultivating the solid reality of virtue, piety, temperance, and industry.

"Are they," he asks, "fit to be the legislators

* See Hallam, vol. II. p. 100; Hume, vol. VII. p. 211; and Bernard on the Constitution, p. 104.

of a whole people who themselves know not what law, what reason, what right and wrong, what crooked and straight, what licit and illicit means? who think that all power consists in outrage, all dignity in the parade of insolence? who neglect every other consideration for the corrupt gratification of their friendships, or the prosecution of their resentments? who disperse their own relations and creatures through the provinces, for the sake of levying taxes and confiscating goods; men, for the greater part, the most profligate and vile, who buy up for themselves what they pretend to expose to sale, who thence collect an exorbitant mass of wealth, which they fraudulently divert from the public service; who thus spread their pillage through the country, and in a moment emerge from penury and rags, to a state of splendour and of wealth? Who could endure such thievish servants, such vicegerents of their lords? Who could believe that the masters and the patrons of a banditti could be the proper guardians of liberty? or who would suppose that he should ever be made one hair more free by such a set of public functionaries (though they might amount to five hundred, elected in this manner from the counties and boroughs) when among them who are the very guardians of liberty, and to whose custody it is committed, there must be so many, who know not either how to use or to enjoy liberty, who either understand the principles or merit the possession? But what is most worthy of remark, those who are the most unworthy of liberty, are wont to behave most ungratefully towards their deliverers. Among such persons, who would be willing either to fight for liberty, or to encounter the least peril in its defence? It is not agreeable to the nature of things, that such persons ever should be free. However much they may brawl about liberty, they are slaves, both at home and abroad, but without perceiving it; and when they

do perceive it, like unruly horses, that are impatient of the bit; they will endeavour to throw off the yoke, not from the love of genuine liberty, (which a good man only loves and knows how to obtain) but from the impulses of pride and little passions. But though they often attempt it by arms, they will make no advances to the execution; they may change their masters, but will never be able to get rid of their servitude.”*

There is this peculiarity about the works of genius, that whatever may have been the immediate cause of their production, they comprise principles and lessons of wisdom that are applicable to all times. Happy had it been for England, had Milton’s cautionary suggestions, relative to the choice of legislators and statesmen, been carefully attended to in more recent times than those for which he wrote! His prophetic eye foresaw what has happened—not under the commonwealth—not under the restoration alone; but under the new dynasty introduced by the “glorious revolution” also:—the government entrusted to men “for the greater part profligate and vile, who dispersed their own relations and creatures through the provinces, for the sake of levying taxes and confiscating goods,” and thus lost England the most valuable of her colonies, and endangered the safety of the rest; men who “bought up for themselves what they pretended to expose for sale; who thence collected an exorbitant mass of wealth, which they fraudulently divested from the public service—who thus spread their pillage through the country, and in a moment emerged from penury and rags, to a state of splendour and of wealth”—impoverishing the industrious, and overwhelming all with an enormous debt and an insupportable load of taxation. Many of our modern statesmen and legislators may

* Prose Works, p. 948.

read their own characters in these eloquent pages; and the people may also learn lessons of wisdom to which they will do well to take heed.

The "Second Defence" was presented to the Protector by Andrew Marvell, accompanied by a letter from the author; but the impression made upon Cromwell's mind, by either the one or the other is extremely uncertain. Marvell, in his letter to Milton, giving an account of the presentation to his excellency, merely says, "my lord read not the letter while I was with him; which I attributed to our dispatch, and some other business tending thereto, which I therefore wished ill to. However, I assure myself that he has since read it with much satisfaction." But whatever may have been the effect of the work upon the mind of Cromwell, its effect upon the public mind, and also upon that of Morus, was great indeed. The French ecclesiastic roared aloud under the chastisement of his powerful antagonist, and he made an ineffectual attempt to reply to "the calumnies" of Milton, which Milton answered in that most tremendous of all castigations, "The Author's Defence of himself against Alexander More, ecclesiastic." It is almost a merciless retaliation on poor More, says Fletcher; and perhaps the severest, acutest, wittiest specimen of retort or reply on record. "Milton's destestation of vice is only equal to the dreadless majesty with which he exposes it. The Latin language, with all its mechanical stubbornness, is perfectly ductile to his will—it melts to his touch, and moulds itself into a fiery essence to do his bidding, and express, like an "airy servitor," the least or the greatest emotions. He was an incomparable reviewer. Nothing escapes him—and he avoids nothing;—he always rushes into the midst of the combat, and he comes out of the hottest mêlée unscathed, and even unbreathed. More was compelled to another struggle; his

answer was again briefly refuted by Milton, in a piece entitled, 'The Author's Answer to the Supplement of Alexander More:' and so ended the controversy; and like the last of every thing, its end is affecting. These political writings, so distinguished by every grace and glory of rhetoric, carried the celebrity of their author's name and cause to the very bounds of classic Europe. The fights are over—the victories won—one adversary after another silenced—the Salmasian controversy concluded: the volcano, with its noisy craters, is extinct—the lava is as cold as the arctic snows—and we have seen a mighty genius acting upon the sky-ward eruption, like the law of gravitation; and the higher the burning fragments of rage and vituperation may have been thrown, the more hideous falls on the earth-born head that ruin of which we have witnessed the recoil."

In 1653, Milton lost his second wife, of whom he appears to have been passionately fond; and he poured forth the sorrow of his heart in a delicate and touching sonnet. This event, perhaps, withdrew him for a while from the busy and turbulent scene of public affairs, excepting so far as his office of Latin secretary to the Protector forced him into it; and he now devoted himself to the prosecution of his History of England (of which, however, he only completed two additional books), to his *Thesaurus Linguae Latineæ*, and his immortal epic poem, "Paradise Lost." The *Thesaurus*, which is stated to have occupied three bulky folio volumes, was never published, but is said to have been advantageously employed by the editors of the Cambridge Dictionary, to whom they were probably given by his nephew Philips. The compilation of such a work, by a sightless man, is one of the most extraordinary literary facts on record, while it curiously exhibits the powers of a mind which could thus instantaneously pass from invention

to compilation, from the luxurious sports of fancy, to the dry and barren drudgeries of verbal recollection.*

It was thus that Milton employed his leisure hours during the remainder of the protectorate. He was evidently dissatisfied with the state of public affairs, but fearing that he might aggravate the existing evils, if he should attempt any thing that would bring him into collision with the Protector, in whom his confidence was not yet wholly lost, he quietly waited in the hope of better days. In a letter dated December 18th, 1657, addressed to a young friend who had written to him soliciting the office of secretary to the English ambassador in Holland, he says, "I am grieved that it is not in my power to serve you in this point, inasmuch as I have very few familiarities with the *gratiosi* of the court, who keep myself almost wholly at home, and am willing to do so." His ambition was not in the least degree selfish; he had no views of personal aggrandisement: he did not look to riches or political honours; and he would not incur an obligation where the recollection of it might in any degree abridge his independence.

In September, 1658, Cromwell, broken down by the cares and anxieties of government—surrounded by difficulties which even his great and powerful mind knew not how to surmount, and suffering acutely under domestic calamity, finished his splendid but unfortunate career, and again left the country to be torn to pieces by the factions, which his vigorous authority alone had for a time held in check. The successor to the protectorate, Richard Cromwell, was not able to guide the helm at this stormy period, and at the end of nine months he resigned his ungracious office. The relics

* Symmes, p. 434.

of the long parliament were then summoned to re-assume the guidance of the Commonwealth; but the contests between them and the army soon introduced a species of anarchy, and threatened the setting up of a military despotism. The Presbyterians, who had for some time been kept down by the Independents, took advantage of these events, and united themselves with the royalists; preferring even the domination of their old antagonists, the Episcopalian, to that perfect liberty, religious as well as civil, which the Independents had always avowed themselves in favour of.

The inquietude of Milton's mind while these events were passing, must have been great indeed. He had seen the structure of liberty, which his ardent imagination had erected, dissolve like a vision into air, and leave scarcely a vestige to intimate the place where the edifice had stood. He now saw nothing but the selfishness of faction trampling upon the rights and the patience of the nation, and precipitating itself with the cause which it professed to support, into irretrievable ruin.

At this crisis, "England had need of him," and he was not deaf to the call of his countrymen. Apprehensive of returning intolerance, from the increasing influence of the Presbyterians, he published two treatises, "devoted to the consideration of two opposite evils, by which the church has always been afflicted or corrupted. Two potent words, **FORCE** and **HIRE**, comprise the scope of both these sound and able pamphlets. The first treatise relates to the exercise of force against conscience; the last, to the equally dangerous exercise of political power or patronage in favour of any religious system."* The former, which is "A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes," shews that "it is not lawful for any power on earth

* Fletcher.

to compel, in matters of religion;" while the latter, which is entitled "Considerations touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church," disposes of the divine right of tithes, church-fees, and church-revenues; and establishes "the voluntary principle" for the maintenance of religious teachers. Both these works are written with beautiful simplicity and earnestness, and should be studied by all who wish to understand the principles of religious liberty.* Upon the latter of these two treatises, Dr. Symmons remarks, with a spirit of ingenuousness which is the more grateful because so seldom met with, that "to the politician, who contemplates in this country the advantages of a church establishment and sees it in union with the most perfect toleration; or to the philosopher, who discovers, in the weakness of human nature, the necessity of present motives to awaken exertion and to stimulate attention, the plan recommended by our author would appear to be visionary or pernicious; and we should not hesitate to condemn it, if its practicability and its inoffensive consequence were not incontrovertibly established, by the testimony of America. From Hudson's Bay, with the small interruption of Canada, to the Mississippi, this immense continent beholds the religion of Jesus, unconnected with the patronage of government, subsisting in independent yet friendly communities, breathing that universal charity which constitutes its vital spirit, and offering, with its distinct, yet blending tones, one grand combination of harmony to the ear of its heavenly Father."

The experiment urged so powerfully by Milton, has there been tried with the most complete success, and the churches, instead of being ob-

* The pamphlet on Removing Hirelings out of the Church, may be had of the publisher of this Life, printed in an uniform shape, price 6d.

† Life of Milton, p. 475.

noxious to the population, and their ministers viewed with suspicion, and subject to hostility, are looked up to with respect and veneration, and are regarded as the genuine offspring of unadulterated Christianity. How different this, from the general feeling entertained toward the church and clergy of Great Britain and Ireland! The clergy and lay impropietors of tithes in Ireland, especially, might read the tract on "The Best Means of Removing Hirelings out of the Church," with advantage; if Scripture or argument can make any impression upon their minds. In what a light does its author represent those, who, averse from the abolition of tithes, argue "that men purchased not their tithe with their land, and such like pettifoggery"—those who "practise violent and irreligious exactions, their seizing of pots and pans from the poor, who have as good right to tithes as they; from some the very beds; their suing and imprisoning, worse than when the canon-law was in force; worse than when those wicked sons of Eli were priests, whose manner was thus to seize their pretended priestly due by force? 1 Samuel ii. 12, &c." How would his honest indignation have been aroused, had he been a spectator of those scenes of violence and of blood, which have, for a series of years, been enacted by the clergy, in a vain attempt to secure their "irreligious exactions;" and how would he have scathed, with the burning lava of his eloquent denunciations, the mercenary and hypocritical authors and agents of those violent outrages?

But it was not tithe, merely, that Milton maintained to be incompatible with the free and pure spirit of Christianity; all constrained payments for supporting a ministry, he demonstrated to be inconsistent with the very genius of religion, and condemnatory of those who professed subjection to its laws. We must quote what he says of other maintenance besides tithes, which, of all Protestants,

our English divines either only or most apparently both require and take.

“ Those are fees for christenings, marriages, and burials: which, though whoso will may give freely, yet being not of right, but of free gift, if they be exacted or established, they become unjust to them who are otherwise maintained; and of such evil note that even the council of Trent, l. ii. p. 240, makes them liable to the laws against simony, who take or demand fees for the administering of any sacrament: ‘ Che la sinodo volendo levare gli abusi introdotti,’ &c. And in the next page, with like severity, it condemns the giving or taking for a benefice, and the celebrating of marriages, christenings, and burials, for fees exacted or demanded: nor counts it less simony to sell the ground or place of burial. And in a state assembly at Orlcans, 1561, it was decreed, ‘ Che non si potesse essiger cosa alcuna, &c. p. 429, That nothing should be exacted for the administering of sacraments, burials, or any other spiritual function.’ Thus much that council, of all others the most popish, and this assembly of papists, though, by their own principles, in bondage to the clergy, were induced, either by their own reason and shame, or by the light of reformation then shining in upon them, or rather by the known canons of many councils and synods long before, to condemn of simony spiritual fees demanded. For if the minister be maintained for his whole ministry, why should he be twice paid for any part thereof? Why should he, like a servant, seek vails over and above his wages? As for christenings, either they themselves call men to baptism, or men of themselves come: if ministers invite, how ill had it become John the Baptist, to demand fees for his baptizing, or Christ for his christenings? Far less it becomes these now, with a greediness lower than that of tradesmen calling passengers to their shop, and yet paid beforehand, to ask again

for doing that which those their founders did freely. If men of themselves come to be baptized, they are either brought by such as already pay the minister, or come to be one of his disciples and maintainers: of whom to ask a fee, as it were for entrance, is a piece of paltry craft or caution, befitting none but beggarly artists. Burials and marriages are so little to be any part of their gain, that they who consider well may find them to be no part of their function. At burials their attendance they allege on the corpse; all the guests do as much unhired. But their prayers at the grave; superstitiously required: yet if required, their last performance to the deceased of their own flock. But the funeral sermon; at their choice, or if not, an occasion offered them to preach out of season, which is one part of their office. But something must be spoken in praise; if due, their duty; if undue, their corruption, a peculiar simony of our divines in England only. But the ground is broken, and especially their unrighteous possession, the chancel. 'To sell that, will not only raise up in judgment the council of Trent against them, but will lose them the best champion of tithes, their zealous antiquary, Sir Henry Spelman; who, in a book written to that purpose, by many cited canons, and some even of times corruptest in the church, proves that fees exacted or demanded for sacraments, marriages, burials, and especially for interring, are wicked, accursed, simoniaical, and abominable: yet thus is the church, for all this noise of reformation, left still unreformed, by the censure of their own synods, their own favourers, a den of thieves and robbers. As for marriages, that ministers should meddle with them, as not sanctified or legitimate, without their celebration, I find no ground in Scripture either of precept or example. Likeliest it is (which our Selden hath well observed, 1. 2, c. 28, Ux. Eb.) that in imitation of heathen priests, who were wont

at nuptials to use many rites and ceremoniess, and especially, judging it would be profitable, and the increase of their authority, not to be spectators only in business of such concernment to the life of man, they insinuated that marriage was not holy without their benediction, and for the better colour, made it a sacrament; being of itself a civil ordinance, a household contract, a thing indifferent and free to the whole race of mankind, not as religious, but as men: best, indeed, undertaken to religious ends, and as the apostle saith, 1 Corinthians vii. 'in the Lord.' Yet not therefore invalid or unholy without a minister and his pretended necessary hallowing, more than any other act, enterprise, or contract, of civil life, which ought all to be done also in the Lord, and to his glory: all which, no less than marriage, were by the cunning of priests heretofore, as material to their profit, transacted at the altar. Our divines deny it to be a sacrament: yet retained the celebration, till prudently a late parliament recovered the civil liberty of marriage from their encroachment, and transferred the ratifying and registering thereof from the canonical shop to the proper cognizance of civil magistrates. Seeing then, that God hath given to ministers under the gospel that only which is justly given them, that is to say, a due and moderate livelihood, the hire of their labour, and that the heave-offering of tithes is abolished with the altar; yea, though not abolished; yet lawless, as they enjoy them; their Melchise-dechian right also trivial and groundless, and both tithes and fees, if exacted or established, unjust and scandalous; we may hope, with them removed, to remove hirelings in some good measure, whom these tempting baits, by law especially to be recovered, allure into the church."*

The appropriation of church property to the exi-

* Prose Works, pp. 430, 431.

gencies of the state, is no new doctrine, as those whose interest it is to uphold the establishment as a secular and wealthy corporation pretend. Upon this subject Milton says, "The civil magistrate hath in his hands the disposal of no small revenues, left perhaps anciently to superstitious, but meant undoubtedly to good and best, uses; and therefore, once made public, applicable by the present magistrate to such uses as the church, or solid reason from whomsoever, shall convince him to think best. And those uses may be, no doubt, much rather than as glebes and augmentations are now bestowed, to grant such requests as these of the churches; or to erect in greater number, all over the land, schools, and competent libraries to those schools, where languages and arts may be taught free together, without the needless, unprofitable, and inconvenient removing to another place. So all the land would be soon better civilized, and they who are taught freely at the public cost might have their education given them on this condition, that therewith content, they should not gad for preferment out of their own country, but continue there thankful for what they received freely, bestowing it as freely on their country, without soaring above the meanness wherein they were born. But how they shall live when they are thus bred and dismissed, will be still the sluggish objection. To which is answered, that those public foundations may be so instituted, as the youth therein may be at once brought up to a competence of learning and to an honest trade; and the hours of teaching so ordered, as their study may be no hindrance to their labour or other calling. This was the breeding of St. Paul, though born of no mean parents, a free citizen of the Roman empire: so little did his trade debase him, that it rather enabled him to use that magnanimity of preaching the gospel through Asia and Europe at his own charges. But our ministers

think scorn to use a trade, and count it the reproach of this age, that tradesmen preach the gospel. It were to be wished they were all tradesmen; they would not so many of them, for want of another trade, make a trade of their preaching: and yet they clamour that tradesmen preach; and yet they preach, while they themselves are the worst tradesmen of all. And, indeed, how could these endowments thrive better with the church, being unjustly taken by those emperors, without suffrage of the people, out of the tributes and public lands of each city, whereby the people became liable to be oppressed with other taxes. Being therefore given for the most part by kings and other public persons, and so likeliest out of the public, and if without the people's consent, unjustly, however to public ends of much concernment, to the good or evil of a commonwealth, and in that regard made public though given by private persons, or which is worse, given as the clergy then persuaded men, for 'heir souls' health, a pious gift; but as the truth was, oftentimes a bribe to God, or to Christ for absolution, as they were then taught, from murders, adulteries, and other heinous crimes; what shall be found heretofore given by kings or princes out of the public, may justly by the magistrate be recalled and reappropriated to the civil revenue: what by private or public persons out of their own, the price of blood or lust, or to some such purgatorial and superstitious uses, not only may, but ought, to be taken off from Christ, as a foul dishonour laid upon him, or not impiously given, nor in particular to any one, but in general to the church's good, may be converted to that use, which shall be judged tending more directly to that general end. Thus did the princes and cities of Germany in the first reformation; and defended their so doing by many reasons, which are set down at large in Sleidan, Lib. 6, Anno 1526, and

Lib. 11, Anno 1537, and Lib. 15, Anno 1540. But that the magistrate either out of that church-revenue which remains yet in his hand, or establishing any other maintenance instead of tithe, should take into his own power the stipendiary maintenance of church ministers, or compel it by law, can stand neither with the people's right, nor with christian liberty, but would suspend the church wholly upon the state, and turn ministers into state pensioners."*

What follows, merits the devout consideration of both clerics and laics.—" Heretofore in the first evangelic times, (and it were happy for Christendom if it were so again,) ministers of the gospel were by nothing else distinguished from other Christians, but by their spiritual knowledge and sanctity of life, for which the church elected them to be her teachers and overseers, though not thereby to separate them from whatever calling she then found them following besides; as the example of St. Paul declares, and the first times of Christianity. When once they affected to be called a clergy, and became, as it were, a peculiar tribe of Levites, a party, a distinct order in the commonwealth, bred up for divines in babbling schools, and fed at the public cost, good for nothing else but what was good for nothing, they soon grew idle: that idleness, with fulness of bread, begat pride and perpetual contention with their feeders, the despised laity, through all ages ever since; to the perverting of religion, and the disturbance of all Christendom. And we may confidently conclude, it never will be otherwise while they are thus upheld undepending on the church, on which alone they anciutely depended, and are by the magistrate publicly maiutained a numerous faction of indigent persons, crept for the most part out of extreme want and bad nurture, claiming by divine right and freehold the tenth of

* Prose Works, pp. 432, 433.

our estates, to monopolize the ministry as their peculiar, which is free and open to all ^{abl^} Christians, elected by any church. Under this retence exempt from all other employment, and enriching themselves on the public, they last of all prove common incendiaries, and exalt their horns against the magistrate himself that maintains them, as the priest of Rome did soon after against his benefactor the emperor, and the presbyters of late in Scotland. Of which hireling crew, together with all the mischiefs, dissensions, troubles, wars merely of their kindling, Christendom might soon rid herself and be happy, if Christians would but know their own dignity, their liberty, their adoption, and let it not be wondered, if I say, their spiritual priesthood, whereby they have all equally access to any ministerial function, whenever called by their own abilities, and the church, though they never came near commencement or university. But while protestants, to avoid the due labour of understanding their own religion, are content to lodge it in the breast, or rather in the books, of a clergyman, and to take it thence by scraps and ~~mammocks~~, as he dispenses it in his Sunday's dole; they will be always learning and never knowing; always infants; always either his vassals, as lay papists are to their priests; or at odds with him, as reformed principles give them some light to be not wholly conformable; whence infinite disturbances in the state, as they do, must needs follow."*

The civil disorders which ensued upon the surrender of the supreme power by Richard Cromwell, gave to General Monk, whom Oliver Cromwell had placed at the head of the forces in Scotland, and was now the governor of that kingdom, an opportunity of marching into England, and laying his plans for the restoration of the monarchy. The

* Prose Works, pp. 437, 438.

people, harassed by the confusion and conflict of parties, were in a state of mind most favourable to the projects of this cunning and perfidious man. The restoration of the kingly power was generally looked upon as a lesser evil than the continuance of that frightful state of commotion and anarchy that had now for so long existed, and the popular current was setting in strongly in favour of the old form of government. Milton was fully aware of what was passing around him; and was seriously alarmed at its probable consequences.

On the 20th of October, 1659, he wrote a letter to a friend, concerning the ruptures in the commonwealth, in which he very plainly hinted his suspicions of Monk, who now appeared to be the arbiter of his country's fate; and he also pointed out the course by which he thought the impending evil might be averted. In one place he says,

“ Being now in anarchy, without a counselling and governing power; and the army, I suppose, finding themselves insufficient to discharge at once both military and civil affairs, the first thing to be found out with all speed, without which no commonwealth can subsist, must be a senate or general council of state, in whom must be the power, first to preserve the public peace, next the commerce with foreign nations, and lastly to raise money for the management of these affairs; thus must be the parliament readmitted to sit, or a council of state, allowed of by the army, since they only now have the power. The terms to be stood on are, liberty of conscience to all professing the Scripture the rule of their faith and worship: and the abjuration of a single person.” He adds, “ If the parliament be thought well dissolved, as not complying fully to grant liberty of conscience, and the necessary consequence thereof, the removal of a forced maintenance upon ministers, then must the army forthwith choose a council of state, whereof as many to be of the

parliament, as are undoubtedly affected to those two conditions proposed. The which I conceive only able to cement and unite for ever the army, either to the parliament recalled, or this chosen council, must be a mutual league and oath, private or publick, not to forsake each other till death; that is to say, that the army be kept up, and all these officers in their places during life, and so likewise the parliament, or counsellors, which will be no way unjust, considering their known merits on either side in council or in field: unless any be found false to any of these two princip!s, or otherwise personally criminous in the judgments of the two parties. If such an union as this be not accepted on the army's part, *be confident there is a single person underneath.* That the army be upheld, the necessity of our affairs and factions will constrain long enough perhaps to content the longest liver in the army. And whether the civil government be an annual democracy, or a perpetual aristocracy, is not to me a consideration for the perils in which we are, and the hazard of our safety from our common enemy, gaping at present to devour us. That it be not an oligarchy, or the faction of a few, may be easily prevented by the members being of their own choosing, who may be found infallibly constant to those two conditions forenamed, full liberty of conscience, and the abjuration of monarchy proposed: and the well-ordered committees of their faithful adherents in every county may give this government the resemblance and effects of a perfect democracy." In conclusion, he observes, " Unless these things, as I have above proposed, one way or other, be once settled, in my fear, which God avert, we instantly ruin; or, at best, become the servants of one or another *single person, the secret author and fomenter of these disturbances.*"*

* Prose Works, p. 413.

His thoughts having been thus stirred up to a consideration of the danger by which the commonwealth was threatened, either by the restoration of the monarchy, or by the erection of a military dictatorship, Milton almost immediately afterwards addressed a letter to General Monk—to whom he doubtless alludes in the letter just quoted—on the “Present Means and brief Delineation of a Free Commonwealth, easy to be put in Practice, and without Delay,” in which he urged upon the General, not such measures as he deemed the most perfect, but such as might be most readily adopted at the moment, to prevent the restoration of “kingship,” and put an end to civil commotion. This was followed by another tract, also addressed to General Monk, entitled “A Ready and Easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth,” in which he employs all his eloquence to persuade the nation not to restore the monarchy, and exhibits a terrific picture of what was likely to result from such a step, should it be taken. The same remark applies to this treatise as to his “Brief Delineation.” Milton *knnew* what were the evils of a monarchy, for he had seen and felt them. He was accustomed to say, that “the mere trappings of a monarchy would be sufficient to support a commonwealth,” and he deplored the profligacy and luxury which it sent out like a mighty river through the kingdom. The possible evils of any other form of government which might be tried, were to him scarcely worth consideration, when compared with the certain and necessary evils of that form with which he had been familiarised. The realization of a pure republic he felt to be impossible at that time, and he therefore proposed such a modification of that system, as would, in his estimation, steer between the two extremes. There is, no doubt, much inconsistency and impracticability in his project, but the honesty of his purpose, and the solicitude he felt for his

country's welfare, are both placed beyond question. The concluding paragraph is fervid and affecting:—

“ I have no more to say at present: few words will save us, well considered; few and easy things now seasonably done. But if the people be so affected as to prostitute religion and liberty to the vain and groundless apprehension, that nothing but kingship can restore trade, not remembering the frequent plagues and pestilences that then wasted this city, such as, through God's mercy, we never have felt since; and that trade flourishes nowhere more than in the free commonwealths of Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries, before their eyes at this day; yet if trade be grown so craving and importunate through the profuse living of tradesmen, that nothing can support it but the luxurious expenses of a nation upon trifles or superfluities; so as if the people generally should betake themselves to frugality, it might prove a dangerous matter, lest tradesmen should mutiny for want of trading; and that therefore we must forego and set to sale religion, liberty, honour, safety, all concernsments divine or human, to keep up trading; if, lastly, after all this light among us, the same reason shall pass for current, to put our necks again under kingship, as was made use of by the Jews to return back to Egypt, and to the worship of their idol queen, because they falsely imagined that they then lived in more plenty and prosperity: our condition is not sound, but rotten, both in religion, and all civil prudence; and will bring us soon, the way we are marching, to those calamities which attend always and unavoidably on luxury, all national judgments under foreign and domestic slavery: so far we shall be from mending our condition by monarchising our government, whatever new conceit now possesses us. However, with all hazard, I have ventured what I thought my duty to speak in season, and to forewarn my country in time;

wherein I doubt not but there be many wise men in all places and degrees, but am sorry the effects of wisdom are so little seen among us. What I have spoken, is the language of that which is not amiss called 'the good old cause;' if it seem strange to any, it will not seem more strange, I hope, than convincing to backsliders. Thus much I perhaps should have said, though I were sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones; and had none to cry to, but with the prophet, 'O earth, earth, earth!' to tell the very soil itself, what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to. Nay, though what I have spoke should happen (which Thou suffer not, who didst create mankind free! nor Thou next, who didst redeem us from being servants of men!) to be the last words of our expiring liberty. But I trust I shall have spoken persuasion to abundance of sensible and ingenuous men; to some, perhaps, whom God may raise from these stones to become children of reviving liberty; and may reclaim, though they now seem choosing them a captain back for Egypt, to bethink themselves a little, and consider whither they are rushing; to exhort this torrent also of the people, not to be so impetuous, but to keep their due channel; and at length recovering and uniting their better resolutions, now that they see already how open and unbounded the insolence and rage is of our common enemies, to stay these ruinous proceedings, justly and timely fearing to what a precipice of destruction the deluge of this epidemic madness would hurry us, through the general defection of a misguided and abused multitude."*

His hopes were, alas! blasted. Monk soon afterwards consummated his perfidy, and betrayed all who confided in him to the butchery of royal vengeance. "With a fearful accumulation of per-

* Prose Works, pp. 451, 462.

jury on his head, he surrendered the nation, without a single stipulation in its favour, to the dominion of a master in whom voluptuousness and cruelty were confounded in a disgusting embrace."

Charles was advancing to take possession of the throne, and Milton had taken too distinguished a part against him not to be endangered by the event. He was therefore hurried from his house in Petty France, and concealed in that of a friend in St. Bartholomew Close. A proclamation was issued, in which it was stated "John Milton and John Goodwin^o are so fled, or so obscure themselves, that no endeavours used for their apprehension can take effect, whereby they may be brought to legal trial, and deservedly receive condign punishment for their treasons and offences." It is said, on the authority of Warton, who states that he had it of Mr. Tyers, that for the purpose of saving the life of Milton, by gaining time, some of his friends reported that he had died, and contrived for him a sham funeral.† At all events, Milton was secured from the fury of the pitiless storm which then raged, and by which so many of his former friends and associates were swept away.

Failing to obtain possession of his person, the king took vengeance on Milton's books. "The Defence of the People of England," and the "Iconoclastes," together with Goodwin's "Obstructors of Justice," were condemned by a vote of the House of Commons, and burnt by the hands of the common hangman—an honour to which they were well entitled! On the 29th of August, (1660), however, the Act of Indemnity was passed, and Milton was included in the general pardon. For

^o Author of "The Obstructors of Justice"—a work in Defence of the execution of Charles the First.

[†] Mr. Dave thinks it likely that it was the humour of Marvell that contrived this premature and mock funeral.—*Life of Andrew Marvell*, p. 48.

this act of clemency, so difficult to account for on ordinary principles, he is said to have been indebted to the exertions of several gentlemen both in the parliament and in the council, amongst whom were Mr. Secretary Morrice, Sir Thomas Clarges, and his old and constant friend, the illustrious Andrew Marvell. "But the principal instrument," says Bishop Newton, "in obtaining Milton's pardon was Sir William Davenant, out of gratitude for Milton having procured his release when he was taken prisoner. It was life for life. Davenant had been saved by Milton's interest, and in return, Milton was saved at Davenant's intercession." Symmons, referring to this subject, remarks, "For the existence of Davenant's obligation to Milton we have the testimony of Wood;* and for the subsequent part of a story, so interesting in itself and so honourable to human nature, the evidence is distinctly and directly to be traced in its ascent from Richardson to Pope, and from Pope to Betterton, the immediate client and intimate of Davenant."†

On the passing of the Act of Oblivion, Milton came forth from his hiding place, but was still persecuted by his enemies. In the month of December following, he was in custody of the serjeant-at-arms, for on the 15th of that month, there is an order entered on the journals of the House of Commons, that Mr. Milton, now in custody of the serjeant-at-arms, be forthwith released, on paying his fees. Milton seems to have objected to the condition upon which his discharge was ordered, for there is an entry on the 17th, to the effect, that "a complaint being made that the serjeant-at-arms had demanded excessive fees, for the imprisonment of Mr. Milton, it be referred to

* *Athenæ Oxon.* II. 412.

† Toland, we find, had previously stated the same thing, p. 116, note.

the committee of privileges to examine what is fit to be given to the serjeant for his fees in this case."

Milton now appears to have abandoned all hopes of rendering his country service by his pen, and he retired into the privacy of domestic life, to pursue his more peaceful studies, and complete the immortal epic, in which he had already made some progress.

There is good reason to believe that Milton might have resumed his place as Latin Secretary, under the restoration, for Richardson* states, upon good authority, that the offer was made to him, but that he declined it; remarking to his wife, who urged his acceptance of it, that she "as other women would ride in her coach; but for himself, it was his aim to live and to die an honest man."—

*He deigned not to belie his soul for self,
Nor turn his very talent to a crime;
He did not loathe the sire to land the son,
But closed the tyrant-hater he begun.*

Nothing but the hope of doing service to his country could ever have reconciled a mind like his to the laborious and harassing situation which he filled in the council; and now that no hope remained, he could have no motive for compliance. In 1665, he married his third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, daughter of Sir Edward Minshull, Knight, of an ancient Cheshire family, who survived him by many years. This step was rendered necessary by the undutiful and unnatural conduct of his two daughters, upon whose attention alone he was dependent for the management of his domestic affairs. His nuncupative will, which was discovered in the prerogative registry, and published by Mr. Warton, opens a glimpse into the interior of Milton's house, and shews him to have been

* Preface to second edition of Milton's Juvenile Poems.

amiable and injured in that private scene, in which alone he has been generally considered as liable to censure; or rather, perhaps, as not entitled to affection. In this will, and in the papers connected with it, we find the venerable father complaining of his "unkind children," as he calls them, for leaving and neglecting him because he was blind; and we see him compelled, as it were, by their injurious conduct, to appeal against them even to his servants. We are assured also, by the deposition on oath of one of these servants, that his complaints were not extorted by slight wrongs, or uttered by capricious passion on trivial provocations: that his children, with the exception, probably of Deborah, who at the time was not more than nine years of age, would occasionally sell his books to the dunghill women, as the witness calls them:—that these daughters were capable of combining with the maid-servant, and of advising her to cheat her master and their father in her marketings; and that one of them, Mary, on being told that her father was to be married, replied, that "that was no news, but if she could hear of his death that were something."

A wife was necessary to rescue him from such undutiful and almost dangerous hands; and in the lady whom his friend, Dr. Paget, selected for him, he seems to have obtained the assistant whom his circumstances demanded. In opposition to the unsavourable report made of her by Philips, says Symmons, and the hints on her temper suggested by Richardson, she appears to have been uniformly attentive and affectionate to her husband. She is the sole object of his regard in his will; and the general harmony of their union is attested by all the depositions to that instrument.

Milton now gave himself wholly up to his literary labours, his great poem doubtless occupying the greater part, though not the whole, of his thoughts.

For some years, his daughters, whom he had taught to read Italian, French, Spanish, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, as well as their own tongue, were in the habit of reading to him such works as he desired; but when this became an irksome employment to them, and they complained, he released them from the task, and appears to have been dependent upon the kind offices of various friends, whose solicitude to minister to his comfort and enjoyment he gratefully acknowledges in some of his familiar epistles. In John Ellwood, a quaker, who was passionately devoted to literature, and who was introduced to him by Dr. Paget, he found a sincere friend and a "constant reader." Ellwood took lodgings in the vicinity of Jewin Street, where Milton then lived, so that he might be upon the spot, and every afternoon, excepting that of Sunday, he was in the habit of reading to him the Roman classics. The quaker speaks of Milton, in his life, with the most affectionate regards, and says that he uniformly experienced from him the kindness of a friend and the instructions of a master.

The following passage in Ellwood's narrative, since it fixes the date of the completion of "Paradise Lost," states the origin of "Paradise Regained;" and, withal, gives us another insight into the unassuming and condescending character of the great poet, will be acceptable.—

"Sometime before I went to Alesbury prison, in 1665, I was desired by my quondam master, Milton, to take a house for him in the neighbourhood where I dwelt, that he might get out of the city, for the safety of himself and his family, the pestilence then growing hot in London. I took a pretty box for him in Giles Chalfont, a mile from me, of which I gave him notice; and intended to have waited on him, and seen him well settled in it, but was prevented by that imprisonment. But now being released, and returned home, I soon made a visit to

him, to welcome him into the country. After some common discourses had passed between us, he called for a manuscript of his; which being brought, he delivered to me, bidding me take it home with me, and read it at my leisure; and when I had so done, to return it to him, with my judgment thereupon.

“ When I came home, and had set myself to read it, I found it was that excellent poem, ‘ Paradise Lost.’ After I had, with the best attention, read it through, I made him another visit, and returned him his book, with due acknowledgment of the favour he had done me, in communicating it to me. He asked me how I liked it, and what I thought of it; which I modestly but freely told him: and after some further discourse about it, I pleasantly said to him, ‘ Thou hast said much here about *Paradise Lost*, but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found?*’ He made me no answer, but sat some time in a muse, then broke off that discourse, and fell upon another subject.

“ After the sickness was over, and the city well cleansed and become safely habitable again, he returned thither. And when afterwards I went to wait on him there, (which I seldom failed of doing whenever my occasions drew me to London,) he shewed me his second poem, called *Paradise Regained*, and in a pleasant tone said to me, ‘ This is owing to you; for you put it into my head, by the question you put to me at Chalfont; which before I had not thought of.’ ”

Toland justly remarks, that “ it is a great wonder this piece should ever be brought to perfection, considering the many interruptions that obstructed it. His youth was spent in study, travelling, and religious controversy; his manhood was employed in affairs of state, or those of his family; and in his latter years, to speak nothing of a decaying

fancy, nor of his personal troubles, he was by reason of his blindness obliged to write by whatsoever hand came next, ten, or twenty, or thirty verses at a time; and consequently must trust the judgment of others, at least for the pointing and orthography."*

The first edition of this magnificent poem was published in 1667, in ten books, eight of which had been written in less than four years—or if it be true that Milton could not indite poetry for more than half the year, from the autumnal to the vernal equinox—about two years was the time occupied in this amazing work. The world, however, had like to have been for ever deprived of this treasure, says Toland, by the ignorance or malice of the licenser, who had been restored with the monarchy; who, among other frivolous exceptions, would needs suppress the whole poem for imaginary treason in the following lines—

As when the sun new risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs.

The copyright of *Paradise Lost* was sold for five pounds, with the contingency of receiving the like sum after the sale of one thousand three hundred of the first impression, and another like sum after the sale of one thousand three hundred of the second edition; neither impression to exceed one thousand five hundred copies.† This bargain and sale has always been referred to with astonishment, as an

* *Life of Milton*, p. 117.

† Milton lived to obtain the whole fifteen pounds for which he had conditionally stipulated, and his widow sold the absolute copyright which he had bequeathed to her, for the sum of eight pounds, on the 21st of December, 1680. Thus, twenty-three pounds was the entire sum that Milton and his family received for the copyright of *Paradise Lost*. It is a curious fact in literary history, that the instrument by which Milton conveyed this copyright to his publisher, was purchased some time since by Rogers, the poet, for the sum of seventy-five or eighty pounds. Thus, the conveyance produced to its possessor nearly four times as much as the poem did to its author!

extraordinary one for so magnificent a work. And so it was, no doubt; although it must not be forgotten, that Milton's republicanism, and the very prominent part he had taken in defence of the republicans, rendered the sale of any such publication by him very problematical after the restoration, and made the risk of printing so large a book as this, a very great one to the publisher.* The sale of the Poem, however, was large and rapid. At the end of two years, thirteen hundred copies had been circulated: in five years a second edition was published, and in four years after this, a third was called for. Before the end of twenty years, it had passed through six editions.

It would be out of place here to attempt any thing like a criticism or analysis of this epic poem; suffice it to say, that for grandeur of conception, fertility of invention, profundity and variety of learning, and sublimity of language, it is not equalled by any production in any language, in ancient or modern times. What has been said of Milton's writings generally, is especially true of his great poem—"Serious, profound, devoted, gigantic in conception, and sublime in words, he speaks an inspired emanation of a higher state of being. There is a sombre awe in him, to which we listen as to an oracle. He dictates, and imposes a force of authority which we dare not question. We tremble while we believe."

When he produced his great poem, Milton had

* All the world knows what influence political prejudices had upon the mind of Johnson, as a critic of Milton's poetry, but the following proof of political prejudice, earlier than Johnson's day, may not be known: "John Milton was one whose natural parts might deservedly give him a place among the principal of our English poets, having written two heroic poems and a tragedy, viz. 'Paradise Lost,' 'Paradise Regained,' and 'Samson Agonistes,' but his fame is gone out like a candle in a snuf, and his memory will always stink, which might have ever lived in honourable repute, had he not been a notorious traitor, and most impiously and villainously belied that blessed martyr, King Charles I.—*Lives of the most famous English Poets, &c. 1687, by William Winstanley.*

laid aside the pen of controversy, and had retired from the strife of politics; but his aspirations after liberty were the same, and his longings for his country's emancipation were unchanged. This is evident from many passages in *Paradise Lost*; the great object of which, in truth, was to exhibit the different effects of liberty and tyranny—to trace natural and social evil to their source in human perversity and wickedness, and thus "justify the ways of God to man."

In 1669, Milton published his "Acedence Commenced Grammar," the object of which is to abridge the labour of acquiring the Latin tongue; and in 1670, appeared his "Paradise Regained," "Samson Agonistes," and the "History of England," of which we have already spoken. In 1673, he sent forth his, "Artis Logicae," and in the following year, a Treatise "Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration; and what best means may be used against the growth of Popery." This was his last work, and he was roused to the task by the dangers with which the country was menaced, through the equivocal policy of the king and the Duke of York, afterwards James II.

The object of this treatise is to shew, first, that no true protestant can persecute another on account of his religious opinions, without renouncing his two main principles wherein, in his estimation, true religion is founded; and next to make it appear that popery is a system inimical to true religion and social order—the former, by placing human tradition above the Scriptures; the latter by yielding implicit obedience to the pope as a temporal prince—and that, therefore, it is not to be tolerated or protected by the state.

It may be thought inconsistent with that perfect religious liberty for which Milton ever contended, that he should thus proscribe one sect from the protection of the civil magistrate, in the exercise

of religious observances. But it must be remembered, in his behalf, that "the papists," as they were then called, were essentially a *political* sect; that they owned allegiance to a foreign prince, who claimed universal dominion, throughout christendom, and that they were at the time he lived, particularly active in their machinations and intrigues, to recover the lost dominions of the papacy. He thus spoke of them in the preface to his "Defence of the People of England," published in 1651: "You find fault with our magistrates for admitting such 'a common sewer of all sorts of sects.' Why should they not? It belongs to the church to cast them out of the communion of the faithful; not to the magistrate to banish them the country, provided they do not offend against the civil laws of the state. Men at first united into civil societies, that they might live safely, and enjoy their liberty, without being wronged or oppressed; and that they might live religiously, and according to the doctrines of Christianity, they united themselves into churches. Civil societies have laws, and churches have a discipline peculiar to themselves, and far differing from each other. And this has been the occasion of so many wars in christendom; to wit, because the civil magistrate and the church confounded their jurisdictions. Therefore we do not admit of the popish sect, so as to tolerate papists at all; for we do not look upon that as a religion, but rather as a hierarchical tyranny, under a cloak of religion, clothed with the spoils of the civil power, which it has usurped to itself, contrary to our Saviour's own doctrine."^o

This is exactly the view he takes of the subject, in the Treatise on Toleration.

"Let us now inquire," he says, "whether popery be tolerable or no. Popery is a double thing to

^o Prose Works, p. 342.

deal with, and claims a two-fold power, ecclesiastical and political, both usurped, and the one supporting the other. But ecclesiastical is ever pretended to political. The pope by this mixed faculty pretends rights to kingdom and states, and especially to this of England, thrones and unthrones kings, and absolves the people from their obedience to them; sometimes interdicts to whole nations the public worship of God, shutting up their churches: and now, since, through the infinite mercy and favour of God, we have shaken off this Babylonish yoke, hath not ceased by his spies and agents, bulls and emissaries, once to destroy both king and parliament; perpetually to seduce, corrupt, and pervert as many as they can of the people. Whether therefore it be fit or reasonable, to tolerate men thus principled in religion towards the state, I submit it to the consideration of all magistrates, who are best able to provide for their own and the public safety."*

Milton, in fact, was as little tolerant of "papists" as he was of "prelates"; and for the same reasons—they were both inimical to the existence of perfect civil and religious liberty. But it must not be supposed that he would countenance persecution. "Are we", he asks, "to punish them by corporal punishment, or fines in their estates, upon account of their religion? I suppose it stands not with the clemency of the gospel, more than what appertains to the security of the state." The means he recommends to "hinder the growth of popery" are—"the reading of the Scriptures," "mutual forbearance and charity amongst those who profess to take the Bible for their guide", and "the amendment of their lives†";—a process of conversion, to which few, we imagine, will object.

It is probable that this was Milton's last work,

* P.o.e Works, p. 564

† Ibid. p. 564.

and it called forth the spleen of the obsequious and unprincipled PARKER, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, who was absolutely furious against the nonconformists, alleging that “tenderness and indulgence to such men, were to nourish vipers in our bowels, and the most sottish neglect of our own quiet and security.” Milton did not reply: Parker had already found his equal in the person of **ANDREW MARVELL**.

His health now declined fast, and his fits of the gout became more severe; but such was the strength of his mind, that Aubrey says, he would, even in the paroxysms of this fell disease, “be very cheerful and sing.” On Sunday, November 8th, 1674, he breathed his last, wanting only a month of completing his sixty-sixth year, in a house in Artillery Walk, leading to Bunhill Fields. His dissolution was so easy, that it was unperceived by the persons in his bed-chamber. “He closed a life,” says Hayley, clouded, indeed, by uncommon and various calamities, yet ennobled by the constant exercise of such rare endowments, as render his name, perhaps, the very first in that radiant and comprehensive list, of which England, the most fertile of countries in the produce of mental power, has reason to be proud.”

He was buried in the church of St. Giles’ Cripplegate, on the 12th of November, “all his learned and great friends in London, not without a friendly concourse of the vulgar, accompanying his body.”^o

John Milton was one of those glorious lights which seem to be sent forth into the world after long intervals, to chase away the darkness accumulated by error and vice, and to point out to mankind the path which leads to freedom and to glory. His sympathies were as enlarged and active as his

^o Toland, p. 137.

mind was stupendous and fertile. His creative genius gave birth to other worlds—

—“Happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells;”

and peopled them with intelligences,

—“whose excellence he saw
Transcend his own by far; whose radiant forms
Divine effulgence, whose high power by far
Exceeded human;”

but still he lived, and thought, and felt with man. Patriotism had with him all the life and vigour of a passion. Wealth and worldly honour could not tempt him to separate himself from the struggles of his countrymen when their liberty was endangered or their emancipation was to be recovered; danger and death could not deter him from taking his place in the foremost ranks, while a gleam of hope remained to encourage resistance to the tyrant.

And he was as unostentatious and unassuming as he was magnanimous and intrepid. He cared not what place he occupied, provided only that it was one in which he could render service to his country and his kind. In the struggle for liberty, he preferred the pen to the sword, “because his mind had always been stronger than his body:” he did “not court the labours of a camp, in which any common person would have been of more service than himself; but resorted to that employment in which his exertions were likely to be of most avail.” In “the province thus assigned to him,” he alternately submitted to the merest drudgery, and undertook the most arduous and honourable labours. At one time he discharged the irksome duties of a pedagogue; at another, he encountered and vanquished the most formidable of his country’s enemies; at one time he drudged as a copyist and translator; at another he pouréd

forth his resistless eloquence in the presence of the senate, or in language and tones, “ winged with red lightnings and impetuous rage,” denounced tyrants and tyranny in the face of assembled Europe. His wonderful intellect illuminated every thing it touched, and has given him a place second to none in literary and political history. His only ambition was to deliver his country from the yoke of civil and religious slavery;—there was nothing selfish in his disposition; he had no views of personal aggrandizement: the apostle’s extorted comparison of himself with his fellow-labourers might justly have been appropriated by Milton—“ In labours more abundant than them all.” Yet, as he says in his Second Defence, “ others, without labour or desert, got possession of honours and emoluments; but no one ever knew me, either soliciting any thing myself, or through the medium of my friends. I usually kept myself secluded at home, where my own property, part of which had been withheld during the civil commotions, and part of which had been absorbed in the oppressive contributions which I had to sustain, afforded me a scanty subsistence.”*

Even Sir Egerton Brydges, who has no sympathy with Milton’s politics, and whose judgment is not unfrequently puzzled to account for his public conduct, bears high and honourable testimony to the worth of his moral character, and the disinterestedness of his labours on behalf of the republican cause. “ As to his own purity and sanctity of soul,” he remarks, “ the declarations of enthusiastic apostrophes in his own prose writings render it impossible to doubt it: he made them in the hearing of his most bitter enemies—public enemies through all Europe,—rendered furious by a common cause, in which all the principles of ancient institutions were involved.”

* Prose Works, p. 135.

Johnson had the baseness to stigmatize Milton as "a morose and malevolent being ;—a man, impatient himself of the social subordination, yet oppressive to those within his power ;—a wretch, who, from pride, austerity, and prudence, was at once a rebel, a tyrant, and a sycophant ;" but the atrocious libel has long since been refuted upon evidence irrefragable ; and the patriot's life shewn to be as pure as his soul was lofty and his labours incessant.

The "harmonical and ingenuous" soul of Milton found fit residence in a "beautiful and well-proportioned body."* Toland, who derived his information from those personally acquainted with him, says, "He was middle-sized and well-proportioned, his deportment erect and manly, his hair of a light brown, his features exactly regular, his complexion wonderfully fair when a youth, and ruddy to the very last."† His early biographer, just referred to, concludes his memoir with a particular description of Milton's domestic habits, and of his general conduct, from which it appears he was temperate in his food, and in all the habits of his life, except in study, in which he indulged to excess, even from his childhood, and to which the loss of his sight is reasonably attributed. His evenings were usually passed in music and conversation, of which he was particularly fond.

"As he looked upon true and absolute freedom to be the greatest happiness of this life, whether to societies or to single persons; so he thought constraint of any sort to be the utmost misery: for which reason he used to tell those about him the entire satisfaction of his mind, that he had constantly employed his strength and faculties in the defence of liberty, and in direct opposition to slavery. He ever expressed the profoundest reverence to the Deity as well in deeds as words; and would say to

* Aubrey, quoted by Symmons, p. 573.

† Page 138.

his friends, that the divine properties of goodness and mercy were adequate rules of human actions, nor less the object of imitation for private advantages, than of admiration or respect for their own excellence and perfection."*

We have it upon the testimony of his daughter, Deborah (Mrs. Clark), that he was delightful company; the life of the conversation, not only on account of his flow of subject, but of his unaffected cheerfulness and civility;† while Francis Junius and N. Heinsius speak of him as a man of an affable, mild, and courteous disposition.‡ Against this, the tittle-tattle of Mrs. Powell, the mother of his first wife, who was herself a woman of bad temper, and strongly prejudiced against her son-in-law, can weigh nothing. His generous conduct to this same Mrs. Powell and her relations, who were, in all probability, the sole cause of his domestic unhappiness, is in itself enough to silence the tongue of calumny. His treatment of the Powells shews that his friendships were permanent, while his enmities were transitory. But as he was ardent in his kindness, he was vehement in his resentment, while it lasted. The malignant slander of his enemies sometimes provoked him into recriminations unbecoming the dignity of his supreme genius, and the piety of his devout heart; but he was not vindictive; witness his conduct towards Salmasius, the most rancorous, insolent, and indomitable of his assailants. "The conflict between me and Salmasius," says he, to his new antagonist, De Moulin, "is now finally terminated by his death; and I will not write against the dead; nor will I reproach him with the loss of life, as he did me with the loss of sight; though there are some, who impute his death to the penetrating severity of

* Life, p. 139.

† Richardson's Remarks, p. xxxvi.

‡ Symmons, p. 379.

my strictures, which he rendered only the more sharp by his endeavours to restrict. When he saw the work which he had in hand proceed slowly on, the time of reply elapsed, the public curiosity subsided, his fame marred, and his reputation lost; the favour of the princes, whose cause he had so ill-defended, alienated, he was destroyed after three years of grief, rather by the force of depression than disease."*

Sir Egerton Brydges justly observes, that the lesson of Milton's life is one of the most instructive that biography affords: it shows what various and dissimilar powers may be united in the same person, and what a grandeur of moral principles may actuate the human heart.

To appreciate his character, however, his prose writings must be especially studied. These are comparatively unknown, but they are a mine of wealth which will amply repay all the time and labour that are bestowed upon them. The principles which they inculcate are identified with all virtue and social happiness, and should be familiarized to the popular mind in all countries, where civil, political, and religious liberty is the avowed object of their institutions. Until those principles are universally recognised and acted upon civil society will be imperfect in its arrangements, and the people and the governments will be subject to the same perpetual uneasiness and uncertainty, respecting the permanent tenure of their respective rights.

* Prose Works, p. 921.

FINIS.

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